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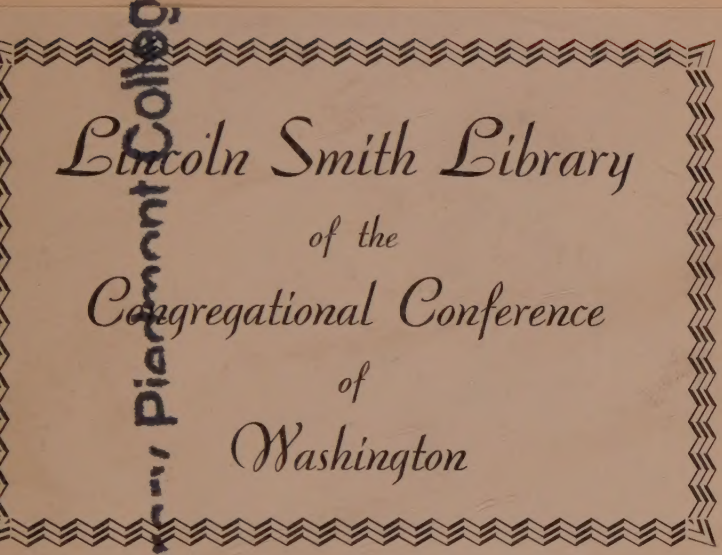

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DISCOURSES ON THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE PHILIPPIANS

BY

REV. FREDERICK A. NOBLE, D. D.

Pastor Union Park Congregational Church, Chicago.

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TO THE MEMBERS
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PASTORATE OF EIGHTEEN YEARS, MY LIFE HAS BEEN
SO INTIMATELY CONNECTED, THIS VOLUME IS
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Opening Words.

"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Phil. 1: 1-2.*

DISCOURSES ON PHILIPPIANS.

I.

OPENING WORDS.

Philippi was the first city in Europe in which the Gospel was preached. It bore anciently the beautiful name of Fountain City; but at a later period it was enlarged by Philip, the King of Macedonia, and called after himself. The location of the town was close to the western border of Thracia, and about nine miles inland from the upper waters of the Ægean Sea. It was here that Brutus and Cassius suffered the overwhelming defeat at the hands of Antony and Octavius, which made the famous triumvirate—Antony, Octavius and Lepidus—masters of the Roman world. In commemoration of the decisive victory of imperialism over republicanism, Augustus conferred upon Philippi the dignity and privilege of a Roman colony.

Paul was drawn to this city by the voice uttering the Macedonian cry: "Come over and help us." He preached his first sermon a little out of the town, on the river's side, where devout Jews, especially women, were wont to gather on the Sabbath for prayer. Lydia of Thyatira—"a seller of purple"—was his first convert. "The Lord opened" her "heart," so that "she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." The apostle visited Philippi twice after this initial visit, and the mutual attachment between him and this church was very strong and fervent.

This Epistle of Paul to the Philippians was written during the time of the apostle's imprisonment at Rome. The internal evidence makes this too clear for reasonable question. He speaks of his "bonds,"—"both in my bonds," "so that my bonds," "confident through my bonds," "thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds." He speaks of the "Prætorian Guard,"—"so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard"; and in thus speaking he has reference, no doubt, to the soldiers who in turn had him in charge. He speaks of "the Saints" who "are of Cæsar's household,"—"all the saints salute you, especially they that are of Cæsar's household." These allusions would seem to leave no room for conjecture. The Epistle to the Philippians, like the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians and Philemon and the second one to Timothy, was written from Rome, and is full of local flavor and suggestion.

By the same token the date of the epistle falls easily within certain well-defined limits. It was written within the period of the "two whole years," mentioned in Acts, of the apostle's imprisonment at Rome. These "two whole years" began near the close of the year of our Lord 60. We have, therefore, for our time boundaries 60–63, the latter part of 60 and the early part of 63, within which this epistle is sure to have been written.

Ramsey, in his recent work on "St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen," seems to set the two years of the imprisonment back considerably; but this is of little consequence to our present purpose. It is a question in debate, also, whether this epistle was written in the earlier or the latter period of the imprisonment. In spite of the arguments of able scholars to the

contrary, it still appears clear to me from internal evidence that the writing of the letter was near the close of the "two whole years."

The occasion of the epistle was an act of very touching kindness to Paul by the Philippian church. Under the limitations of his confinement at Rome the apostle could no longer support himself by the labor of his own hands as he had done at Thessalonica and Corinth and Ephesus. In his destitution and distress the Philippian brethren had come to his help with a liberal contribution. Epaphroditus, one of their own number, had brought the timely gift. This faithful messenger had remained, and in some very special and efficient way had assisted Paul in his work. But in the course of his services Epaphroditus was seized with a serious illness. His brethren at Philippi heard of it and became anxious. As soon as he was well enough the apostle sent him back with this delightful letter, in which he expressed his hearty thanks for such generous remembrance of him in his need, bore enthusiastic testimony to the love and devotion of Epaphroditus, gave information respecting his own condition and feelings, and added such affectionate counsel as in his thought would be of value to the members of the church which he esteemed so highly.

In this way then, and at the time and place just indicated, the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians came into existence. It was written in the straits of imprisonment and under the burden of deep solicitude; but it was written in love, and the whole atmosphere of the letter is fragrant with love. As has been said by another: "There is no letter of St. Paul's so absolutely free from the necessity of rebuke, and, accordingly, there is none

so full of joy, in spite of all the circumstances of suffering and anxiety under which it was written."

This epistle opens with a beautiful picture of companionship in love and labor.

The first words are "Paul and Timothy." The same names are associated in the second letter to the Corinthians, and also in the letter to the Colossians, with exactly the same formulary in both these instances: "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Timothy our brother." The two names reappear in the Epistle to Philemon—only there is a slight change in the way in which they are introduced: "Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother." In the two Epistles to the Thessalonians there is the added name of Silvanus—"Paul and Silvanus and Timothy."

Paul seems to have been exceedingly fond of having somebody with him in his Christian work. Fellowship strengthened and comforted him. It appears indeed to have been a necessity of his nature. Doubtless the wisdom of the Master in sending forth His disciples "two by two," commended itself to his judgment as well as his heart. On his great missionary tours there was always some man along with him whose name was bound up in close connection with his own name. It was "Paul and Barnabas"; it was "Paul and Mark"; it was "Paul and Silas." There at Philippi it was "Paul and Silas" who were arrested and imprisoned, and who held that ever memorable prayer-meeting, which was followed by the swinging wide open of the doors of the jail, and converting the jailor, and giving to the world those words which from that day to this have been a classic direction to troubled and inquir-

ing souls: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house." It was "Paul and Titus"; it was "Paul and Timothy."

Of Timothy Paul was especially fond. He speaks of him as his "own son in the faith." The probabilities are that he was brought into the acceptance of Christ on the first visit of the great apostle to Lystra. He was of mixed parentage, for though his mother was a Jewess, his father was a Greek. His religious training began early, and was tender and thorough. It is more than any ordinary good fortune to have a mother like Eunice and a grandmother like Lois. His mind had been fitted for the truth by the study of the truth, and when He who is the way and the truth and the life was presented to him in all the freshness and with all the power at the command of an inspired apostle, he was quick to receive Him, and make Him the ground of his hope, and the law and motive of his conduct.

For the seven subsequent years he grew in grace and knowledge, and when, at the end of this period, the apostle returned to the scenes of his former labors and perils and sufferings, the young Timothy was prepared, in the judgment of his fellow Christians both at Lystra and Iconium, and in the judgment as well as personal partiality of Paul, to be dedicated to missionary service. This was done and he became an evangelist, a messenger of the churches, and a worker whose fidelity and wisdom and love drew the heart of his spiritual father to him in the bonds of a peculiarly sacred attachment and made his name fragrant forever with all who love our Lord. He came into intimate relations with Paul, and the two were to each other all that is implied in the endearing name of father and son.

Timothy was with Paul at Philippi. He was with Paul at Corinth. Sometimes he went before Paul to prepare the way. Often he lingered in a place after Paul had left to finish some work still undone. He went here and there on mediating and missionary errands. He was incessant in Christian activities. Paul could not have been long a prisoner at Rome when Timothy found his way to his side, that he might show to him the tenderness and depth of his sympathy, and aid him in his struggles, and assist him in his plans.

There will be occasion later on in the study of this epistle to note the glowing way in which the apostle speaks of Timothy, and to say somewhat more about his capabilities and character.

It is not simple courtesy nor mere sentiment which links these two names of Paul and Timothy together here in this salutation. The close association of them means more. It means mutual love and confidence. It means common desires and interests and aspirations. It means a strengthening of each other to do and to bear. The union of the two men in this fellowship of faith and devotion to duty was not simply the union of Paul by himself and Timothy by himself. Paul was more than merely himself because of Timothy, and Timothy was more than merely himself because of Paul, and the two together gave a larger resultant of love and confidence and zeal and success than would have been possible without the two together. There is no wiser way, nor more promising way, to do the Lord's work in city or village, and in far away lands, than the good old way of "two by two."

But if we have here in these introductory words a

beautiful picture of companionship in love and labor, so also do we have a striking illustration of humility and consecration. For what is the description which Paul gives of himself and Timothy? In what attitude are they represented? "Servants of Christ Jesus,"— these are the words. In the original, as shown in the margin it is—"bond-servants."

It is worth our noticing that Paul has joined himself with Timothy at the outset of his letter on terms of equality. It is "Paul and Timothy." There is no indication in the language used of any sense of superiority. When occasion required Paul could assert his apostleship with vigor and dignity; but he did not do it here. It is not Paul the inspired apostle, and Timothy the convert, but it is "Paul and Timothy." So in these added words—"servants of Christ Jesus"—Paul goes down to the bottom and takes his place on an equality with Timothy. "Servants"—"bond-servants"—"of Christ Jesus." They are there together and they are there in the same spirit, and the consecration of themselves to the Lord is as complete as they know how to make it.

This was the sum and substance of Paul's ministry—service. He was in the ministry not to lord it over God's heritage, and show his superiority to the average brother, but to serve. In his estimation to be a servant of Christ was to be exalted above kings. This was his conception of the Christian life—service. This is the conception which he exemplified. His head, his hand, his heart, his culture, his experience, his faith, his bounding hope, his visions, were all laid down at the feet of Christ, and devoted without reserve to the wel-

fare of humanity. We read of Paul the Apostle, but we read also of Paul the servant; and in service he was ready to spend and be spent.

This is the true idea of the Christian life. It is not ease; it is not self-indulgence; it is not striving for the highest and softest places; it is service. It is this spirit in the Christian life which has advanced Christian civilization to its present standing. When there are more men and women in the Church who are ready to write after their names, "Servants of Jesus Christ," and who are willing to do their best to make good the claim that they are "servants," the Kingdom of God will move on, and mighty victories will be won. When we think how brief the time is in which we can labor effectually for the bettering of the world, and what rewards and glories await the redeemed in the ages to come, we can well afford to consecrate our energies to those ends which will lift humanity nearer to God.

Observe further, that the apostle addresses these Philippian disciples as "saints"—"to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." He puts himself at the bottom; calls himself along with Timothy "a servant"; but to them to whom he writes he gives the highest and most honorable designation at his command—he calls them "saints."

What did he mean by this? Was it a species of artful flattery? Was he trying to get into the good graces of these disciples by attributing to them qualities which, according to any severe standard of judging, they could not possibly have possessed? Or had the members of this Philippian church really made such attainments in the Christian life, grown into such fulness of faith and love and purity that they might

fitly be called "saints," and accorded this high rank in the estimation of all?

Hardly. These Philippian "saints" were not saints because they were perfect, and there was nothing more for them to do in the direction of conformity to the divine will, but because they had given themselves to God in faith and surrender, and God in the exercise of his grace had made them his own. In the days in which Paul preached and wrote, all Christians were freely designated as "saints." To the Roman believers he wrote as to those who were "called to be saints." So also to the believers at Corinth. The Ephesian Christians were "saints." The Colossian Christians were "saints." They were "saints" for the reason that sainthood meant nothing more or less than such a consecration of the life as is both implied and involved in the apprehension of us by God in Christ, and in virtue of which we are no longer our own, but the Lord's. To be a "saint" in the true sense of the term is to have been consecrated to God and His service. Any man who truly belongs to God is a "saint."

But this is far from saying that every man who belongs to God is a perfect man. These "saints" at Philippi, good as they were; these "saints" at Ephesus, were not perfect. Paul saw a great many particulars in which they might be improved. This is why he prayed for them, and lavished his love and counsel on them. He wanted them to press on to the full realization of all it meant to be God's own people.

It is not a mockery to call any man a "saint" who has really come into the fellowship and under the power of God. But it would be a piece of presumption to speak of any saint here on the earth as perfect.

Men may be saints in the sense that they are blameless, but not in the sense that they are faultless. Blameless all may be, and ought to be, but to be faultless is a more difficult achievement. The little child that takes needle and thread and sits and sews with faithfulness is to be commended, but the sewing may be so imperfect that every stitch of it will have to be taken out and sewed over again. The Christian who lives up to his light, and uses his ability to the utmost is blameless, and no doubt there were not a few of this sort in the Philippian communion, and no doubt there are many such all about us in our day; but when it comes to the question of perfection we are forced to a different conclusion. A flawless character is the final achievement. Any man whom God has set apart to Himself, and who acknowledges this consecration, and is trying to realize what it means, is a "saint."

We must not dismiss the consideration of this clause without calling attention at least to that little word "all"—"to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." Paul did not have a few "pet" saints in his mind when he wrote this letter. Doubtless there were some of these Philippian disciples who were more agreeable, personally, than others; they had better discipline and better stored minds, more attractive manners, quicker perception of the proprieties, a larger generosity, a profounder sympathy with good causes, a completer fellowship with Christ. But the apostle made no distinctions. His love was for them all. His wisdom and experience were at the service of them all. His great heart went out to them all, and he took them all in, and bore them all up to God in the arms of his faith and love.

A few sentences will be enough to devote to the phrase which follows right after the one we have just had before us, and which is in fact a part of the whole clause: "with the bishops and deacons." "To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." Who and what are these "bishops"? Are they more and higher than ordinary presbyters, or ministers, or pastors, or teachers in the Church?

The Rev. Dr. Alfred Barry, Principal of King's College, London, and Canon of Worcester Cathedral, in a remark in which he is endorsed by Bishop Ellicott, says: "There is now no question—and but for supposed ecclesiastical necessities, there never could have been any question—that in the Holy Scriptures . . . the two titles of 'bishop' and 'presbyter' are applied to the same persons." Bishop Lightfoot affirms: "It is a fact now generally recognized by the theologians of all shades of opinion, that in the language of the New Testament the same officer in the church is called indifferently 'bishop,' or' elder,' or 'presbyter.'" He lends an almost startling emphasis to this statement by the avowal made in another connection: "For the opinion hazarded by Theodoret and adopted by many later writers, that the same officers in the Church who were first called apostles were afterwards to be designated bishops, is baseless."

At a stroke this sweeps away the whole foolish and impertinent claim that the New Testament furnishes any warrant for the assumption of a distinction in clerical order and an ecclesiastical superiority of those who are called "bishops."

Bishops, as we know them, are a human invention.

Churches may have them if they like,—individual churches and bodies of churches. It is their right. But when a bishop, other than the New Testament sort, assumes, on the ground that he finds the word "bishop" or "overseer" employed by the sacred writers, that he belongs to another and higher order of ministry than others who have been called of God and ordained and set apart to the high service of the Church,—or failing in this contention, puts forth the claim that in some mysterious way he and his class alone have come into the line of the apostolic succession, he needs in the interest of truth and unity and a real brotherhood, to have his pretentions punctured. A New Testament "bishop" is a New Testament "presbyter"; and New Testament bishops and presbyters are simply ministers of Jesus Christ and pastors of churches.

It remains to give a thought to the closing sentence of this opening paragraph: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

These words are commonly viewed as a mere expression of courtesy and good will. On this theory, if spoken instead of being written, they would be equivalent to our greeting when we say: "Good morning" to a member of the family circle, or "How do you do?" to a neighbor or friend. This would make of the phrase simply a form, and it would have no more meaning or value than the similar forms used by all letter-writers of the olden time.

Doubtless so much is in the words, but is this all? Have they no other and higher significance? Without falling into sacerdotalism may it not be justly inferred that the use of this language by the apostle carried with

it the assurance of a divine co-operation in securing the realization of the wish?

The late Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, England, in his "Lectures on the Ephesians," calls attention to the fact that the apostles, when they were sent out by our Lord on their evangelistic circuit, were to salute any house they might enter; and if the house proved worthy, their peace was to come upon it, but if not their peace was to return to them. Having brought this fact to mind, he adds: "It was really to bring peace to those whose hearts were simple, trustful, and devout. The words of benediction were to be confirmed and fulfilled by God. And Paul had equal authority to speak in God's name."

If this be the true view, then these words of salutation are lifted out of the realm of mere courtesy and become words of prayer and assurance. They are channels along which God's blessing flows in upon the hearts of men who are prepared to receive it. Then, too, as often as a good man—one called of God to speak in the name of the Master and to be the organ of spiritual communication—stands up to utter the formulary of grace and peace on the souls of his fellow-disciples, and his fellow-disciples are sincere and open in their desires for a divine blessing, God vitalizes and honors the words, and they become the medium of a new measure of grace and an aid to the peace that floweth like a river. In this spirit and with this hope may my lips be anointed to utter and your hearts be opened to receive the precious salutation: "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Loving Interest in the Philippians.

"I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers with me of grace. For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

—*Phil. 1: 3–11.*

II.

LOVING INTEREST IN THE PHILIPPIANS.

This section of the epistle reveals to us what may be called in the way of a general theme: *The Loving Interest of the Apostle in the Philippian Brethren.*

In the study of this section we shall see how tender and deep were the feelings of the apostle toward them, how glad and how profoundly grateful to God he was for their faith and affection and fidelity, and what were the ideals of the Christian life he held up before them, and with what earnestness he prayed that the best things might be realized by them. This general theme, however, will subdivide itself into a number of minor themes as we follow the passage through, clause by clause.

I. *First of all we have avowal of the grateful remembrance in which these fellow-believers at Philippi were held by Paul.*

"I thank my Lord upon all my remembrance of you."

By this remembrance Paul did not mean to say that as often as he chanced to think of them he was glad in the recollection, and was ready to make acknowledgment of his joy; but rather to affirm that he carried them habitually in his mind, and was profoundly and jubilantly thankful in the thought of them.

This grateful remembrance, we are justified in believing, covered or included at least three specifications.

1. To begin with Paul was glad in these Philippian brethren because of the hearty way in which they came into the acceptance of Christ, and the fidelity with

which they had continued in Christ, and the spiritual progress they had made.

The church at Philippi, it will be recalled, was started by Paul and Silas and Timothy, though Timothy, who had just been set apart to missionary service, was probably only a quiet worker, during the great apostle's second evangelizing tour. There were but few Jews in the city, consequently the distractions and oppositions and hindrances to spiritual growth which disciples to the faith were forced to encounter from this source in some places were almost wholly wanting, especially at the outset, at Philippi. The converts do not appear to have been many at first, but they were sincere and earnest, and the association of their own original knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus with the bitter cost of it in stripes and imprisonment to Paul, who had brought this knowledge to them, helped to hold them to high and exemplary standards of Christian character.

2. Then the heart of the apostle had been deeply touched by the generous contributions which these Philippian brethren had made to his needs. No other church, so far as is reported, ever did this. But these Philippian brethren came to his aid on three separate occasions. "Once and again," as he says in the closing chapter of his letter, soon after he left Macedonia, this church ministered to his necessities, and a third time they "revived" their "thought" of him in this practical way during his imprisonment at Rome. This "thought" of him, and this cheerful supplying of what he calls in another epistle "the measure of" his "want," gave to these people a warm and permanent place in the affections of Paul. The more so because this Philippian church was not rich, but poor. "The abundance of

their joy and *their deep poverty* abounded unto the riches of their liberality."

3. But the special ground—the ground mentioned and emphasized—for this grateful remembrance was their "fellowship in furtherance of the Gospel from the first day," until the day Paul wrote this letter. The little church had been in existence about ten years, and through the whole of this decade the members of it had been marked in an eminent degree for their union and zeal and consecration in the great business of the Gospel,—making it known to men, securing the acceptance of it by men, and building men up in the purity and power of it. Some would limit this "fellowship in the furtherance of the Gospel" to what these Philippian Christians had done to second the efforts of Paul; but while this may be the technical meaning of the language, the apostle's thought, in my judgment, was larger. He was glad and grateful for their hearty missionary spirit. This spirit which they manifested, brought him into special sympathy with them, and made them one with him in aim and work. The device on Paul's banner was: "Furtherance of the Gospel." Whoever cherished the same high purpose and sought for the same object was dear to him. The Philippian "saints" were in this fellowship. "Even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as, both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, ye are all partakers with me of grace" What is this grace? The high privilege granted of God to be a witness and a worker for Jesus Christ. "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I shall preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

"To you"—you Philippian believers—"it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also suffer in His behalf."

II. *The next large and commanding fact to arrest attention is the confident expectation expressed by the apostle that God who had begun a good work in the lives of these Philippian believers would carry the work on to a triumphant completeness.*

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The point here to be specially noted—noted both for the instruction and encouragement which are in it—is the unquestioning assurance that what God had begun in the hearts of these men and women He would carry on toward perfection. He is not to be defeated in His gracious purposes.

This is a truth to be magnified. It is a deep and increasing conviction of mine that in the beginning of our Christian lives and in the discharge of our Christian duties, and in the development of our Christian characters, not enough prominence is given to what is done on the divine side. In the reaction from those extreme views of the sovereignty of God which left man little or nothing to do in the working out of his own salvation we have fallen into a way of thinking in which God has hardly anything to do and man has nearly everything. But it is impossible to be long with Paul in his writings without discovering how pronounced and uniform is the stress he lays on the help derived from God by every human soul who succeeds in winning the victory which overcometh the world. In his way of looking at it God's

grace in Christ is the beginning and the end, and it is only by opening the heart to the influences which reach one through God in Christ, and coming under the power of them, and keeping under the power of them, that a person ever sets out or holds on in the divine life. Paul was certain that no man ever turns his face toward righteousness with a sincere and earnest desire to win righteousness without an impulse given him from on high; but he was just as certain that when God moves on the heart of a man, and a man yields up his life to the instruction and guidance of God, God will take him through. There may be disappointments, there may be temptations and troubles manifold; but God will see that he wins in the end. This is His will. This is what God loves to do. Paul's confidence had its warrant in the character of God.

III. *There unfolds before us now the prayer which Paul was wont to offer, and which he put on record on behalf of these brethren at Philippi.*

This is the crowning testimony of his loving interest. In this prayer we shall see at once how tender and solicitous was his love for the members of this church, and what was his conception of the aims and attainments which should characterize a true church of our divine Lord.

His approach to the prayer is on this wise: "For God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus."

The prayer is in these words: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things which are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of

offense unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

A little careful examination discloses the fact that this prayer includes one large general petition, with the specification of several subordinate ends, which he hopes may come from the realization of it. This large general petition is for love. "And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment." He wants them to have love. He wants them to have a love whose abounding or overflowing shall be increasingly characterized by knowledge and discernment, or a clear and sober intellectual judgment.

These Philippian brethren had some measure of love already. They loved the Lord Jesus Christ. They loved the apostle Paul. They loved one another. The faith into which they had come was dear to their hearts. But this large-souled man whose experiences of the love of God in the divine Redeemer were so rich, knew there were realms of love yet unexplored by them, depths of love yet unsounded, possibilities of love yet unrealized, and his desire was that the members of this Philippian communion should advance into the fullness of the joy and energizing force of this love. He desired this because love is the atmosphere in which everything else that is good will best breathe and thrive. Love is the guide whose hand takes us on into the perfection of Christian character. God is love; and to love is to be Godlike.

But let us go back once more to those modifying words—"knowledge and discernment." "And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and all discernment." What is the apostle's

thought? How is love to abound in knowledge and discernment?

It is quite evident that Paul had in mind a love which is not mere gush or frothy sentimentalism. The love which he sought to have these disciples come into was not a wild, unregulated and baseless emotion, but a love whose tap-root is intelligence. It was love of the high and sacred quality which brought the Son of God into the world and led Him to go about doing good and to die on the cross.

Hence first of all this specification of *knowledge.* There can be no love of the sort indicated without knowledge. It is not worth while to try to have love abound unless it be in knowledge. There are two elements in this knowledge which deserve attention.

One is the element of thoroughness. For this knowledge of which the apostle is speaking is not a knowledge by which we just barely know a thing; it is rather a knowledge by which we know *right into a thing,* and so know the thing perfectly. It is not *gnosis* merely, it is *epignosis.*

The other element is that it is to be spiritual knowledge, or knowledge of God. No doubt this knowledge may include any facts and truths which help to give an intelligent and enduring basis to love, and minister to the soul's growth in grace. But the ultimate object contemplated in this knowledge is not reached till God is reached, and we have a better conception and a better comprehension of Him. We are to know Him in the holy secrets whispered to our souls by the voice of the Spirit, and in the sweet sanctuary of His thought and life. Love leads on into this knowledge of God, and the knowledge of God re-acts to produce love. When

love abounds more and more in knowledge—in the knowledge of God—it is always wise and helpful.

But to this specification of knowledge there is added the specification of *all discernment.* The Greek word which is here translated "discernment," appears nowhere else in the New Testament; but the meaning of it is sufficiently obvious. It means a well developed moral sensitiveness; moral acuteness; an eye quick to perceive and a heart quick to feel moral distinctions. One writer calls it "moral tact." It is the perception which takes place with the ethical senses whereby, as in the flash of an instant, some things are seen to be right and others wrong. It is the direct opposite of those dull and inactive feelings which are not aroused and hurt by the presence of moral evil. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to have had the exact idea in mind when he wrote of "those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil."

Now of a love like this it is easy to perceive there cannot be too much. If it be rooted in the knowledge of God, and if it be ethical in its temper and habit, so as not to be blinded and misled by the mere seeming of things, there is no higher blessing for which to pray. Paul may pray for it for Philippians and Ephesians and all the rest of them. We may pray for it,—pray for it for ourselves, and pray for it for all who have named the name of our Lord, with all the faith and earnestness at our command, and be sure that every answer which comes will be equivalent to a rare benediction of God. Love, if it be intelligent and ethical, is the fulfilling of the law. Love suffereth long and is kind. Love is the bond of perfectness. "Now abideth faith,

hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love."

With hurried glance look now at some of the more detailed ends which Paul had in mind in his prayer, and which he could have had no doubt would be gained, if only the larger petition he offered could be realized. Three specifications follow on in quick succession.

1. "So that ye may approve the things that are excellent."

Enough has already been said on the words "knowledge" and "discernment" to illustrate this clause of the sentence. There is to be "knowledge" and "discernment" for just this purpose—to enable one to make quick and sure moral distinctions. Were we to gather up and preserve each shade of meaning in the words Paul uses, the statement would seem about like this: In order that having proved by actual experiment or test, ye may know what things are better. This is the high service which love abounding more and more in knowledge and all discernment is to render—it is to enable one to put things to the proof in his actual every-day life, and in this practical way find out what things are right and good and true. One whose love abounds in knowledge and all discernment has the keen instinct by which he feels his way, without any long process of calculation, to the right conclusions, and the moral energy to incorporate these conclusions into his life, and live them out day by day.

It is a great faculty this, and it is a great achievement—to be able to distinguish in such way as never to miss the excellent. Hardly any aim could be better than this of bringing the mind and the heart into such a state that excellent things are always approved. Hardly

any habit would be more rewarding and healthy than the habit of giving instant and unstinted approbation to excellent things.

2. "That ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ."

What is this sincerity? Our dictionaries tell us that sincerity is "honesty of mind," "freedom from simulation," and the like. A sincere man is a man in whom the reality corresponds to the appearance. All this is true. But the conception which Paul had in mind, most likely, when he wrote the word here rendered "sincere" was that of a man who can stand the test of sunlight, and in whose life there is nothing to make him wish for the darkness to cover him, and conceal his inconsistencies and defects. He is a man whose moral nature, so far as honesty and purpose are concerned, might be subjected to the fierce exposure of the "X rays" without humiliation. In such a man there is no indirection, no pretenses; he is open, straightforward and honest.

Is not this precisely what we all ought to be? Have we not been called into a marvelous light? Are not so many of us as have heeded this call the children of light? Ought we not to walk as the children of light?

It is a great and very valuable thing to be *sincere.* With all the facilities we have of being *in*-sincere; and with all the temptations we are forced to encounter to be *in*-sincere; and with so many of the customs and methods of men justifying us in being *in*-sincere, it is nothing less than a sublime achievement to stand out frank and open and straightforward—just what one seems to be—that really to be.

Not all will master this high sincerity in the same

easy way. There are constitutional differences in men in this regard.

Some men are so made up that they have a natural itching for crooked ways and sharp underhand schemes, or appear to have. They cannot let the best and clearest cause stand upon its merits; they must bolster it up with some sort of a sham argument or trick. They cannot approach another for a favor, which it is quite evident will be granted, without going through certain sorts of strategic movements. They seem constrained to be diplomatic. One sees through the whole maneuver at once, and smiles that anyone should think him so lacking in perception as not to be able to see it. Something which it is not quite honest to withhold is kept back. Something which is known to be specious is brought forward. Light is reflected obliquely from their minds. Things must be put in some shape other than they really are before they are thought to be presentable.

Others again, through their mental and moral make-up, are just as much averse to equivocations and pretenses. They can neither utter lies nor act lies. There is nothing like intrigue and artifice in them. They are frank men. These latter will find it comparatively easy to be sincere—for the currents of their natures set this way; while the former class find it hard.

But hard or easy, against the grain of our natural constitutions, or with the grain, we must be sincere, if we would be ideal Christians.

Further than this he says: "*Void of offense.*" What is it to be void of offense? Literally it is *not striking the foot* against anything; and then it is *not stumbling*

in consequence of having struck the foot against something; and then it is—*faultless.* A man "*void of offense*" is a man to whom no blame attaches, who is never guilty of any such *mis*-conduct that blame may be rightly attached to him. To be a man void of offense is to be a man who does not stumble morally.

All of us, it may be safely assumed, stumble more or less, and so are not quite "void of offense." How comforting to those of us who are most deeply conscious of this to find such words as these written: "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

But is there not much stumbling which is not only wholly inconsistent with a Godly walk, but which has also only small excuse? Is there not much stumbling which is exceedingly offensive and mischievous? We are avaricious and the lust of gain makes us stumble and bring offense. We are hot tempered, and the unrestrained impulse to speak out quick and sharp makes us stumble, and in this way offense is occasioned. We are proud, and the subterfuges prompted by pride make us stumble, and offense follows. Every faculty, every passion, every appetite, every path along which we may walk has something in it over which it is possible to stumble. If we are zealous, we are liable to become over-zealous, and offend by this kind of excess. If we are cautious and attempt to feel our way along, then we are in danger of shrivelling into cowards, and offending on that side. It is only by the utmost care that we can succeed in walking our ways and doing our work in the world "*void of offense.*" The only way we can hope to do it is by keeping our hearts and our lives so full of Christ that serving Him becomes both a prin-

ciple and a passion with us. The apostle's standard was a high one, but no man is justified in having a lower one: "*Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.*"

The apostle did not fail to strengthen the sense of obligation he was here urging by a great motive drawn from the future. "That ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ." Twice in this passage we are now considering is the thought of "the day of Christ" introduced. A little back it was—"until the day of Jesus Christ." Here is it "unto the day of Christ." The meaning is not exactly the same in both instances; but both foreshadow an hour when the soul shall pass in final review before the Lord, and an account shall be given of the deeds done in the body. For any individual soul that hour may be near, or it may be far; but sooner or later it is sure. For one who is trying to do his best the fact is full of sweet encouragement; but for one who is indifferent to God and careless and sinful in his living there is wholesome warning in this "day of Christ."

3. "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are through Jesus Christ, and unto the glory and praise of God."

This "fruit of righteousness" may mean two things. It may mean the good works which are wrought by a righteous man in the spirit and power of Christ. It may mean the righteous character which is developed in a man when he accepts Christ in faith and does his best to shape his life after the pattern of the life of our Lord. In the first instance the eye is fixed on what a man does; in the other instance it is fixed on what a

man becomes. In the one instance the thought in mind is Christian usefulness; in the other instance it is Christian character. Beyond any reasonable doubt it is this latter idea—or the idea of the righteous character which comes to one through the living of a life of faith on the Son of God—which was present to the apostle when he gave expression to these words. He was thinking of the righteousness of Christ which is ours by the appropriation of faith, as against our own righteousness which is of the Law. He was thinking of the righteousness which was of God, and which will give us secure standing with God now and forevermore.

This he was sure would be "unto the glory and praise of God." Paul believed with the Master that God is glorified by our bringing forth much fruit. He does not appear to have had any very enthusiastic opinion of a righteousness which fails to announce itself in righteous deeds. But righteous character was in his estimate one of the rarest products ever grown in the soil of our humanity. A sinner cleansed from his sin by the blood of Christ, and then carried up under the influence and instruction of the Spirit of Christ, till the love and purity and integrity and nobility of Christ reproduce themselves in some appreciable degree in his character, and it is evident that he is advancing from stage to stage toward a closer likeness to the Perfect One, and is clearly of those who by and by shall be permitted to see Him face to face, is the crowning tribute to the glory and praise of God. How magnificent and lofty is the strain in which the apostle sets this forth in his Epistle to the Ephesians, and how fit to be our closing word: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who . . . chose us in Him

before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love; having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself . . . to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

Helped by Misfortune and Opposition.

"Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel; so that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest; and that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one *do it* of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel: but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds. What then? only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."—*Phil. 1: 12–18.*

III.

HELPED BY MISFORTUNE AND OPPOSITION.

The general theme of our present discourse is: *Helped by Misfortune and Opposition.*

In the seventy-sixth Psalm, through which there breathes such a spirit of enthusiastic courage and confidence, and which is devoted to the exaltation of the Divine Sovereign, and the magnifying of His irresistible power and glory, we are assured that even the wrath of man is turned to the praise of God. The wicked may plot against God, and do their worst to stay the progress of His Kingdom, and to defeat and injure His people; and up to certain limits they may succeed in their bad designs; but in the end they will be beaten. Their devices will be made to further the truth, and to promote the interests they fondly hoped to subvert. This is the fine mastery which God has of the situation.

A striking illustration of this divine method of overruling evil intentions to good ends is found in the way in which the advancement of the Gospel of Christ was aided by the misfortunes which befell the Apostle Paul, and the opposition he was forced to encounter in the prosecution of his great mission.

Paul had an earnest desire to visit Rome. He longed and prayed that he might meet the disciples who were there, with a view to comforting his own heart by what they might say to him, and strengthening and establishing their hearts by what he might say to them.

Besides he wanted to reach souls which had not yet been reached. He was intent on fruit among these Gentiles as he had been on fruit among other Gentiles. He counted himself debtor to Greeks and Barbarians, to wise and foolish alike, and he was "ready," so he says, —but by "ready" he really meant eager, to publish the glad tidings in the Eternal City.

Anybody can understand what an immense advantage it would be to one who wished to spread abroad a knowledge of Jesus and His loving grace to be set down at the center of so much culture and influence and power as were represented at the proud capital of the Roman Empire. Within the walls of this mighty town, which was at once a focal and a radiating point of civilization and authority—this mighty town which attracted and dominated the world, it might be possible to reach the ear of classes and orders and religions not open to one less centrally located, and to put in motion currents of thought and life to flow out as far as Roman laws might be made known and Roman arms might penetrate. The apostle recognized the strategic value of cities in his missionary operations. He sought the cities. No wonder he wanted to stand in Rome, the city of cities, that he might preach there the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But how did Paul get to Rome? He had longed, he had prayed, and very often he had formed the purpose to go there; but for some reason, up to the stage of his career in which we are now studying him, he had been hindered and thwarted in his plans. How has it been brought to pass that he is there finally? Why, his enemies came to the rescue and took him up and carried him there. What he had not been able to accom-

plish through his own wit and energy, the mad opposers of the truth he uttered and the salvation he announced, blinded by their own passionate willfulness, accomplished for him. The wrath of men became the breath of God which wafted him from the capital of David and Solomon to the capital of the Cæsars. He had prayed that God would open the door for him into this city; God had heard his prayer, and in His own divine way had answered it.

When Paul arrived at Jerusalem, on his fifth journey to the city after his conversion, he was met with open and bitter hostility. Efforts at conciliation were vain. The mob spirit was invoked, and he would have been killed outright had it not been for the protection afforded him by Claudius Lysias. To circumvent and escape a Jewish conspiracy of which he had been apprised, the chief captain, under cover of night and accompanied by a strong guard, had Paul conveyed to Cæsarea. But the apostle left Jerusalem well assured of what his ultimate destination would be. For on the night following his forceful but friendly deliverance from the fierce Sanhedrim, and his incarceration in the castle, the Lord had stood by him and said: "As thou hast testified concerning me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

At Cæsarea Paul fell under the jurisdiction of Felix. His imprisonment here continued for two years. At the end of this period Felix was succeeded by Festus. Then in due time another hearing was granted to the apostle. The result of this new hearing was the famous appeal to Cæsar. On the first opportunity this Christian missionary, who had made such magnificent use of his confinement to utter wholesome and saving

truths to Felix and Drusilla and Festus and Agrippa and Bernice, and we know not how many others of mark, and who knew also how to stand on his right as a Roman citizen, was placed in charge of a centurion and put on board a ship, and through storm and wreck and every sort of peril was conducted on his forward way till his Lord's assurance was realized, and he was at Rome.

It was a strange way in which to get the business done. But it was done effectually. It was done in a way to make the record of it eminent and instructive for all the ages. The scheming hatred of the Jews and the power of the mightiest pagan nation on the globe were the agencies employed of God to secure this end. He was there, with two whole years at least before him, and with what in some respects must be considered rare chances for doing work for the Master, and bearing his testimony to the redeeming love of God in Christ; and his enemies had put him there. His enemies had furnished him transportation and a splendid escort. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together—He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."

But the same method of dealing wherein the wrath of man is made to praise the Lord, and misfortunes and oppositions are turned into aids to the advancement of the truth, which was illustrated in Paul's reaching Rome, had further illustration in the experiences he was called to pass through after he had reached Rome. "Now I would have you know brethren, that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the Gospel."

Here is a general statement to the effect that what at

the outset seemed unpropitious and unpromising proved in the event to be favorable. Under this general statement three facts are specified and brought forward in evidence of what the general statement discloses.

1. The first fact is that in virtue of his bonds he was able to make his own fidelity to Christ manifest, and to make Christ known to the soldiers who had him in keeping, and to others as well, whether of the military force or citizens. "So that my bonds became manifest in Christ throughout the whole prætorian guard, and to all the rest."

Paul was a strange prisoner. No matter what his bodily presence, he could not have failed to make instant impression on those with whom he came in contact, of his wide intelligence and earnest convictions and wonderful personality. Any average soldier having charge of him would naturally want to know of his career and character, and what the indictment lodged against him. When the discovery was made that he was guilty of no vice, that he had committed no crime, that he had advocated no sedition and had stirred up no rebellion, but had simply been telling the story of salvation from sin through faith in the crucified Christ, curiosity, not to say interest and sympathy, would be sure to be aroused among all the members of the guard, and the narrative would be repeated from one to another, and serious questions would be asked about this crucified Christ who was able to awaken such love and loyalty as were exhibited by the apostle. For this is what his bonds meant, and this is what became manifest. It became manifest to the soldiers who guarded him, the whole body of them at length, and to many who were not soldiers as well, that Paul was in bonds simply and solely

because he believed in Christ as the Son of God and the Redeemer of mankind, and desired to win others to the same belief.

Just this fact of his bonds was a marvelous opportunity for access to the hearts of these military men. Indeed, when we come to think of it, what better chance for effective preaching can we imagine than Paul there in bonds for Christ's sake, and lovingly and enthusiastically telling the story of Christ. He saw and used the chance which his enemies, under the overruling of the providence of God, had made for him, and his bonds were turned to the saving of souls and the progress of the Kingdom. He was in chains; but he made his chains emphasize the truth he uttered. He was under the constant watch of soldiers, but he made this enforced closeness of personal relation an occasion for whispering words of light and salvation in the ears of men who in the next ordering of affairs might be sent to the remotest boundaries of the Roman Empire, there to rehearse for their own comfort, or for the edification of others, the teachings of the apostle. How true the old familiar words, and in how many forms and circumstances they have illustration.

> "God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform;
> He plants His footsteps in the sea,
> And rides upon the storm."

2. The second fact brought forward by Paul in proof that the things which happened unto him fell out rather to the helping than the hindering of the progress of the Gospel is the way in which the disciples at Rome were emboldened, by seeing what he did in his bonds, to speak out for Christ and bear witness to the faith that

was in their hearts. "And that most of the brethren in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the Word of God without fear."

Courage was put into them by this striking example of fidelity to principle unawed by power and unsubdued by difficulties. Their zeal was quickened. If they, or any of them, had been disposed to compromise with their own convictions and consciences, and to utter their avowals of the faith in whispers, they were shamed out of their half-heartedness. If this man did not find his bonds an impediment to aggressive movements for Christ, but made them an occasion for successful witnessing and working, much more should they who were perfectly free to come and go, do what they might through plain speaking and personal effort to make Christ known to their fellow-men. Paul's bonds stirred these disciples to new confidence and activity.

It is always so. A man who works in circumstances of inconvenience or pain or peril which to many minds might be expected to justify him in doing nothing, never fails to excite the spirit of work in other men. A man who is true to the truth, and unfaltering in his devotion to some high duty, with ostracism or a dungeon or the gallows confronting him, not unfrequently puts moral might into a whole generation. This is the high service of the Martyrs—they help to make men true and courageous.

3. The third fact cited by the apostle to make good his claim that the Gospel had been helped forward by his own personal misfortunes was the new and peculiar interest which had been awakened in the preaching of Christ. "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy

and strife, and some also of good will; the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel; but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds."

The simple explanation of this is that there were two parties in the Church at Rome.

There were those who were out-and-out followers of Paul. They accepted the truth as he held it, and formulated it and preached it. They fell in with his methods. They caught his spirit and aims, and they readily lent themselves to the power of his hot and unquenchable enthusiasm.

There were others who clung with great tenacity to old forms and were reluctant to accept the faith of Christ in its simplicity. They were the Judaizing party, or the party whose members gave in their adhesion to Christianity with their eyes turned back over their shoulders towards the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish ritual, and who cherished a tender fondness for worship in the temple. These were the antagonists of Paul, and took pains to oppose him wherever they could. The Epistle to the Romans shows in many ways how strong this Judaizing element was in the Church at Rome.

These two opposing parties came into sharp array on the arrival of Paul in the city. His presence and his activity stirred them both up. They both began to preach Christ. In this there was substantially no difference between them. The difference lay in the spirit and motive with which they preached. One party held forth Christ in a temper of good will and love, and in heartiest co-operation with the imprisoned Paul. The other party held forth Christ in a temper of envy and strife and faction. This party had a kind of regard for Christ and a

kind of wish to have Him magnified; but its members wanted Paul thrust into the background, and his followers, as opposed to themselves, humiliated.

The whole case has been set forth in a single paragraph by one of our exegetical writers. "Though the apostle's enemies preach Christ as do the others, they do not, like them, seek to edify the Church, and to assist the apostle, but stir up strife and hatred against him. They preach Jesus as the promised One, that those who hear may say: 'This is indeed also Christian preaching, we need not run after Paul.' They thus draw the Church to themselves, and withdraw it from Paul. They preach concerning Christ essentially as he does, only either more strictly to please those who are zealous for the law, or more loosely for the sake of those who are still weak, or in a more rhetorical way not to offend the cultivated as does the apostle. Thus they not merely weaken the attachment of others to him, and draw away his followers, but excite enmity against him, and thereby make his chains still more galling." If we recall the words we shall see how exactly and fully this explains them. "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will; the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel, but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds."

But what is Paul's thought of it? What is the spirit he exhibits in view of this partisan preaching of Christ? Hear him. "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth Christ is preached; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Paul was keen enough to see what was going on, and to catch the drift of things. But he was too large a man

to let any personal feeling come in to sway his judgment and chill his enthusiasm over the preaching of Christ. Men might be wrong in their motives, and narrow and bigoted in their prejudices; but if they preached Christ,—if they pointed to Him as the One who was to come, and tried to turn the thoughts and hearts of men to trust in Him, he would make it the ground of sincere and earnest rejoicing. So broad was the man. So complete was his consecration to Christ.

It may fitly be said in conclusion that this instance of God's overruling the evil schemes of bad men to the glory of His own name, and the success of His servants, and the triumph of His truth, is only one out of a multitude of instances which illustrate our human history. The tyranny and oppression of Egyptian kings was made the occasion for divine interposition and a glorious deliverance of the chosen of the Lord from their long bondage. The captivity of Israel and the machinations of enemies made Daniel an immortal figure in the annals of the world. When the Pope issued his famous bull against Martin Luther he set the seal to the Reformation. The Stuarts harried the Nonconformists out of the kingdom; but they set the Pilgrims down on Plymouth Rock, and laid the foundation of this magnificent Republic with its free schools, and free churches, and equal laws. What abolitionists could not do to rid the land of the crime and curse of slavery, and what liberty-loving statesmen could not do, and what an enlightened and indignant public opinion could not do, the enemies of freedom in their blinding madness put it into the power of Abraham Lincoln to do. Men who work against truth and liberty and righteousness will be held to account, for they are

treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; but their bad endeavors will often be made the occasion for advancing good causes to higher grounds. We are not to say or feel there is no difference between good and evil; for there is, and the two can never be made one; but we are to rejoice that God has the skill through His Providence so often to turn bad intentions and bad actions to virtuous account. It is as Lowell sings:

"Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the World;
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

Living to Serve.

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh,—*if* this is the fruit of my work, then what I shall choose I wot not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better: yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide, yea, and abide with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith; that your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again."—*Phil. 1: 19–26.*

IV.

LIVING TO SERVE.

The thought in this passage which it seems to me desirable to emphasize is: *Living to Serve.*

But this thought will be clearer to us, and we shall be better prepared to appreciate it, if we reach it by the same steps the apostle took to reach it.

Back at the beginning of the paragraph of which the section now under consideration is a part, Paul says: "Now I would have you know brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the Gospel." The truth was not hindered, but aided, by the attempts of its enemies to suppress the proclamation of it, and the story of salvation through faith in the Son of God became known to persons and in quarters altogether inaccessible without the assistance of a mad and persecuting opposition which knew not what it did. There was a general overruling for good of the mischievous devices and intents of the men who hated Christ. This he wanted the brethren to "know." He knew it, and he wanted them to know it.

Here, too, he starts in with a statement whose content is something known. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation." In the former instance he says that the things which happened to him resulted in the progress of the Gospel. In this instance he declares that the preaching of Christ, even though it be done in a factious spirit, and from motives of envy and jealousy toward himself, is to turn to his own good. This is his

serene confidence: "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation."

What is this salvation? Ordinarily the word means the deliverance from sin which is wrought by Christ when He is accepted in faith. But Paul was a "saved" man already. He had long been a glad disciple of Jesus, and a mighty and successful worker in His service. The word, therefore, cannot stand for salvation in the sense which is commonly attached to it by readers of the New Testament. A study of the passage makes it evident, also, that the word cannot be altogether emptied of its spiritual significance, and lowered till it has some mere outward meaning only. Some have thought it must be interpreted as the preservation of his life; others as release from captivity; others as victory over his enemies; still others as the reaching of people not yet brought under the power of the Gospel; but no one of these suggestions quite meets the case. For the two of them, namely, preservation of life and release from captivity, which seem to come the nearer to a satisfactory explanation, leave out an element which was evidently present to the thought of the apostle when he wrote.

Beyond any question, as it appears to me, Paul had two ideas in mind when he gave expression to this word "salvation."

First he had in mind the idea of his own personal safety which included the preservation of his life and his release from captivity. He had no consuming anxiety about this, as we shall see in a moment, but this was the way his expectations set. This is put beyond gainsaying by a single sentence in the Epistle to Philemon, which was also written from Rome, not far from

the time the Epistle to the Philippians was written. The sentence is as follows: "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I hope that through your prayers I shall be granted unto you." Here was an evident looking forward to release from imprisonment, and a counting on the prayers of his "beloved and fellow-worker" Philemon to help in securing this release. Further on in the selection now before us for review, the apostle says: "And having this confidence, I know" —am certain—"that I shall abide, yea, and abide with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith; that your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus in me, through my presence with you again." Whether the expected release actually came, and Paul visited this devoted and affectionate company of Philippian disciples once more or not, is a question left largely to inference; but that he had in mind such a deliverance when he spoke of certain things turning to his salvation, there can be no reasonable doubt.

In the second place it is pretty clear that Paul could not have used this great word "salvation"—a word which meant so much on his lips and when falling from his pen—without implying at least, much more than mere bodily safety and liberty. Paul had in thought the additional idea of the carrying on, in his own soul, of the renewing and enlarging and sanctifying work of grace which was begun when he accepted Christ, and which had been continued and helped forward ever since by all sorts of experiences. The Gospel was advanced by the plots and oppositions of foes. So, too, his own spiritual life had been advanced, and would be advanced by these severe trials. His salvation would be a complete salvation for the reason that what he had passed

through, and was still to pass through, would bring him, in all his views and plans and feelings and hopes, into a closer identification with the Son of God. It was not alone others who were to be helped through him by these intrigues and assaults, but his own spiritual good was to be promoted.

But how was this to turn to his salvation? Two ways are indicated in the passage given. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your supplications and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

First, these Philippian brethren were to pray for him, and through their prayers he was to be helped. If freedom to go and come in the Master's service, and a new and closer identification of his life with the life of the Lord, were to be secured to him, these blessings must come largely through the united and earnest supplication of his fellow-disciples. Whatever others might think of it the apostle believed in the efficacy of prayer. He prayed for those for whom his heart was burdened, and he wished those who were friendly to him, and interested in the success of his endeavors for Christ, to pray for him. "Brethren pray for us," is one of his familiar and touching entreaties. There is no need of any further citations either in proof or illustration of the faith Paul had in prayer and of the eager desire he cherished to be remembered in prayer; but let me quote the request he makes to these same Roman disciples in the midst of whom he was at the time of writing his letter to the Philippians, for the reason that it shows at once how highly he esteemed prayer offered in his behalf, and his belief that prayer might help him out of difficulties similar to those in which he was here involved. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord

Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea, and that my ministrations which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God."

Second, the assistance of the Divine Spirit was to be ministered unto the apostle. This assistance, or "supply," might come in answer to their supplications for him, or it might come partly in answer to their supplications, and partly in independence of them. At any rate Paul conceives the help to be of two kinds,—the help of their prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit might be given to him in response to their asking; but it was the Spirit Himself who was to supply him with the needed light and courage and comfort and strength and all fulness of grace.

It is to be observed that the Spirit here is called, not the "Spirit" simply nor the "Holy Spirit," nor the "Spirit of God," nor the "Divine Spirit," but the "Spirit of Jesus Christ." Instances of this same usage are found in Romans where it is said: "But if any man hath not *the Spirit of Christ* he is none of His"; and in Second Corinthians where the language is: "*Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord* is there is liberty"; and in Galatians where it is written: "Because ye are Sons, God sent forth *the Spirit of His Son* into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father"; and in First Peter where we find: "Searching what time or what manner of time *the Spirit of Christ* which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them."

This form of statement is not without its peculiar

significance, and needs an emphasis of its own. When used, especially by Paul, it is well-nigh impossible to escape the impression that, consciously or unconsciously, the writer has two distinct conceptions in his mind. One is the large and general office of the Spirit, by whatever name called, such as working conviction of sin, or guiding into the truth, or purifying and comforting and strengthening one; the other is the specific office of the Spirit whereby the mind or temper of Christ is reproduced in the heart of a believer. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ as well as the Spirit of God, because He is sent by the Father in the name of the Son; but beyond this He is the Spirit of Christ, because His aim is to transform every life He influences into the likeness of Christ. How much it meant, therefore, when Paul spoke of the "supply" of the Spirit of Christ, and how surely this supply would work toward his salvation.

With a sudden and safe leap the apostle's thought bounded on from this salvation which concerned him personally and which he was sure would be helped through the occasion of his trials, to what, in virtue of his identification with Him, concerned his Divine Lord. Passing on from the clauses just considered he adds: "according to my earnest expectation and hope," words looking back to the salutary influence which his bad treatment and misfortunes are to have upon him, and forward to the moral and spiritual attitude in which he is to stand if he is helped as he wishes to be, by the prayers of his Philippian brethren and the Spirit of Christ,—"that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that with all boldness as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

The thought here is not of himself chiefly, but of the glory of Christ.

Paul saw that a crisis was approaching in his affairs. He felt it drawing rapidly on. His soul was stirred with deep emotions in view of it. The fear, or if not the fear, the possibility flashed into his mind, that he might be unequal to the strain of his trial. He seems to have said to himself, as we all of us do now and then in the face of difficulties: "What if I should fail." It was a humilating thought. It was also a stimulating thought. For immediately the man appears to fall to talking with himself, and we can almost hear him say: "Fail! But I must not fail. I must not be put to shame. I must not falter and fall from lack of courage. Be it life or be it death to me, I must remember that the name of Christ, through my connection with Him, is at stake in my conduct, and that at all hazards and costs Christ must be magnified." This was his intense solicitude—that Christ should be magnified. This, in fact, whether the apostle ever gave it this shaping in his own mind or not, was one of the methods and proofs by which things designed to be injurious, and naturally reckoned injurious, were turning to his salvation,—Christ could have an ampler magnifying in and through him, in and through his fearlessness, in and through his unimpeachable character, in and through his superb fidelity, and in and through his lofty superiority to the dread of death.

It was an elevated aim. It was a splendid loyalty. Disinterested devotion could go no further. He took the banner across whose face was written the name of Christ, and he held it aloft and said: "Come what may,

—what may of humiliation, what may of personal hardship and pain,—come death even, this name of Jesus must be exalted and magnified."

This brings us to the perplexing alternations with which the apostle, because of his love for Christ, and the intimacy of his life with the life of Christ, found himself confronted. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if to live in the flesh,—if this be the fruit of my work, what I shall choose I wot not. But I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better; yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for your sake."

So far as his own personal views and feelings and interests were concerned this was the way Paul balanced the question of going or remaining.

In any event it was Christ. It was Christ for him to live, because Christ had been, and if his life should be prolonged He still would be, the spring of all his actions and joy, and the One to whom all his energy and time and influence and possessions would be devoted. It was Christ for him to live, because he opened his heart so wide to the Spirit of Christ, and permitted his mind to become so penetrated with the mind of Christ, and put on Christ so effectually in the development of his character, and brought all his powers and faculties so completely under the control of Christ.

So to die was Christ. For death, according to his conception of it would advance him into a presence more immediate, and a fellowship closer with Christ. It would be no longer a dim imperfect seeing, but a clear face-to-face seeing. This he counted better—what, indeed, in his eager enthusiasm he ventured to call "very far better." A similar opinion and a similar desire are

expressed in the apostle's second letter to the Corinthians. "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle"—or bodily frame—"be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life." Paul knew that while he was at home in the body, he was absent, in this free open way, from the Lord; but he preferred, so far as he might have a preference, to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord. In this sense to die would be gain.

In Paul's estimation, therefore, death is not an event to be dreaded by a Christian. It cuts short the earthly existence, but it opens the way to an endless and joyous existence out in the unseen world. Death is the launching of the ship and sending it forth to its destined haven across the sea.

One of the writers on this passage calls attention to an inference this desire of Paul to depart and be with Christ yields which is of a great deal of significance. It is this fact of being at once with Christ. "Unless," he says, "Paul believed that the death which released him from the trials of this life were to introduce him at once to the presence of Christ, and a state of blessedness, we see no adequate reason for the struggle between his desire to depart and be with Christ and his anxiety to labor still for the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom on earth. If he believed that he was to remain for

an indefinite time without consciousness in the grave, his zeal for men's salvation and his contempt of personal dangers and trials in the pursuit of that object, would lead him to desire to live as long as possible, on account of the importance of his ministry to mankind. On the other hand, if we suppose him to have regarded his attainment of the joys and rewards of heaven as simultaneous with his departure from this world, we have then an adequate explanation of his perplexity." Whatever views men may have of an intermediate state, and the resurrection and judgment, Paul evidently had no thought that he was to be kept waiting an indefinite period in some anteroom of eternity before seeing Christ.

But notwithstanding this eagerness to be gone, and this confidence that this going would usher his soul into the open presence and measureless joy of Christ, Paul said: "No, if it is better for me to remain; if anybody can be helped by my remaining; if effectual service can be rendered by my remaining; if hearts can be won to the Lord, and disciples encouraged, and the Kingdom built up, by further efforts of mine, and if this be the pleasure of God, and the disposition of Providence concerning me, then my own personal preference shall yield to duty, and I will try and serve."

Paul was not a coward. The plots of enemies, oppositions, trials, hardships, pains, disabilities, did not daunt his courageous soul. He would meet them just as long as God called him to do it.

Paul was not selfish. He shirked no obligations. Burdens which belonged on his own shoulders he threw on no other shoulders. His own plans he could give up

freely. His own advantages he could forego. He could stand on the very threshold of heaven, and look over upon its delights, and hear its music, and witness its glad and exalted fellowships, and then turn back to render service to souls in need of light and strength and guidance. He did not want to live for the mere satisfaction of living; all the satisfaction was over there. He did not want to live for any gain life might bring him; the gain would be in dying. But in a love which was kindled at the flame of the love of Christ, he was willing to toil on still, to spend and be spent, and to endure all sorts of hardship, for the sake of being serviceable.

After all is not this the open secret of the highest kind of living, and of the sweetest and most enduring joy—living to serve? Does any other man get so much out of life as he, who, in a spirit of dutifulness and devotion, puts just as much of himself, and just as much of truth and light and love into his fellow-men as he can? Why do we think more of Paul than of Nero? Why do we esteem George Washington above Napoleon Bonaparte? Why do we place Lincoln on a higher pedestal than any other ruler of his time? Why do we reckon Dwight L. Moody a nobler specimen of a man than some of our shrewd millionaires? Why do we keep the memory of Mary Lyon fresh and fragrant, while we forget with such facility the names of hundreds of women who were the belles and butterflies of their generation? Why do we build monuments to perpetuate the fame of souls who were large enough and brave enough to suffer martyrdom for truth?

The answer to these questions is on every lip. It is because of the regard which is entertained for the spirit

of service, and the sense of the value of the service which men and women actuated by the spirit of service have rendered to mankind.

Would it not be a beautiful act, and one prophetic of good to our own souls, and of good to other souls, were we to catch the spirit of the apostle, and erect his thought into a motto, and go forth in the spirit of consecration to service!

"Hands that ope to receive
Empty close; they only live
Richly who can richly give."

Walking Worthy of the Gospel.

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ: that, whether I come and see you or be absent, I may hear of your state, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries: which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God; because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf: having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."—*Phil. 1: 27–30.*

V.

WALKING WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL.

The central thought of this passage lies in the opening words, and from these words we are to derive our general theme, which is: *Walking Worthy of the Gospel*

The apostle has been stating his feelings in view of a probable release from imprisonment, and the opportunity this would afford him of revisiting the disciples at Philippi. As between life and death he preferred death, because death would usher him into the immediate presence of Christ. As between departing and in this way increasing his own personal satisfaction, and remaining and doing what he might to help others, he preferred to remain and be of use. But whatever the issue,—whether freedom were granted to him, and with freedom the privilege of coming and seeing once more these beloved fellow-believers, or he was still to be held in custody, he wanted to be assured they were living in a way to accredit their faith to the world, and to illustrate the love and purity and power of Him who had saved them from their sins. "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ."

It will reward us to linger here a moment. This phrase,—"let your manner of life be"—is exceedingly significant. In the original it is expressed in one word—πολιτεύεσθε. The root of this word is πόλις—the Greek word for city. From this word we get our familiar English words, "police," "politics," "politicians," and the like. They are all words which have primary refer-

ence to cities and the control of cities. To modern thought these words have become more or less degraded by what has been permitted to be done under shelter of them; but at the outset they stood for lofty ideas and lofty views and actions.

Paul conceived of these Philippian Christians as citizens. They were Roman citizens, and were proud, no doubt, of the distinction and privileges their Roman citizenship conferred on them. But they were citizens of a great earthly empire not only, but of a heavenly commonwealth. In the twentieth verse of the third chapter of this epistle the same idea is reproduced, "*For our citizenship is in heaven.*" They were citizens of an earthly kingdom; but they were also citizens of a spiritual kingdom—the Kingdom of God. Through Christ whom they had accepted in faith these persons were no longer strangers and sojourners; they were fellow-citizens with the saints,—with the saints on earth and the saints in heaven. They were in a divine realm; they were under divine laws; they owed obedience to a divine Sovereign; they were the subjects of a kingdom not of this world.

Looking upon the disciples to whom he wrote in this light, and doing his best to get the disciples to look upon themselves in this light, the apostle, expressing his wish in terms of tenderest solicitude, but with a straightforward earnestness, said: "Now be true citizens of the commonwealth of God; meet the responsibilities and discharge the duties of your citizenship in the large, loyal fashion which might be expected of those who, through the infinite riches of divine grace, have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light." For substance this is what

would have been suggested to the minds of these Philippian believers by the peculiar word the apostle was led to use. They would have thought of good citizenship in the state elevated into good citizenship in the kingdom of righteousness.

One writer intimates that the word may have passed beyond the special meaning attaching to it from its derivation, and have had only the general significance of conducting the life properly; but the word is so singular, and the circumstances of its utterance were so exceptional, that this could hardly have been possible.

Paul meant to stir, and doubtless did stir, those sentiments which we call patriotic, and which are highest and holiest when kindled in devotion to the interests that center in the Kingdom of God.

Practically this would mean just what our translation of the word yields us. It would mean living after a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. It would mean personal purity, and loyalty to truth, and fidelity to every obligation, and the highest kind of integrity, and an interest in everything which looks toward the glory of God and the welfare of humanity.

But what are the measures and methods indicated by the apostle through which the manner of life may be shown to be worthy of the Gospel of Christ? He names four.

1. *The first is steadfastness.*

"That ye may stand fast." We shall see in a moment in what sphere and to what end this steadfastness is to be exemplified. But it is a thought of immense import by itself. Had the apostle just said—"stand fast," and stopped right there, he would have given an invaluable counsel. The idea is of holding one's ground in

battle. It is not giving way, but of sustaining one's position under assault. How fit the imagery. Job's question long ago was: "Is there not a warfare to man upon the earth?" Especially is there not a warfare to man upon the earth when he undertakes to follow in the steps of the Master and to do the will of God? In this warfare many things are essential to success; but steadfastness is indispensable. There never will be any magnificent victories without it. "Stand fast," "stand fast in the faith," "stand fast . . . in liberty," "stand fast in the Lord," are among the familiar phrases and ringing injunctions of Paul which have the same underlying notion of holding one's ground in a contest, and yielding nothing to the enemy. Steadfastness.

It is good to begin; but it is better to hold steady to the end. It is encouraging to see anybody set out with God; but setting out in the sunshine and amid smiles, it may be, will the man continue when storms gather and the night falls? It is not the surprise and glow of the comet which tells; but the enduring light of the fixed stars. Dryden sings of one who "was everything by starts and nothing long." Of course he was "nothing long." Being "nothing long" it needed no eye of seer or imagination of poet to forcast the outcome. No spurting can take the place of trained and systematic pulling at the oars. The time to boast is not when the armor is put on, but when, at the end of an honorable and successful campaign, it is put off. The sudden blaze and crackle of thorns is of much less account than the abiding warmth and glow of the solid hickory. Noah was steadfast. No trials, no discouragements, were suffered to cool the ardor of his obedience.

Having begun to build the ark he kept right on with his task till it was done. Steadfastness.

Some people unite with the Church, and then never so much as attempt to do anything. But of those who unite with the Church and do undertake some sort of work, how few there are who never weary in their well-doing. Both for the inward and the outward life, the watchword must be—steadfastness.

2. *The second way in which both to aid and illustrate this walking worthy of the Gospel is by exhibiting the spirit of unity.*

"That ye may stand fast in one spirit." This is the particular in which in this case the steadfastness just spoken of is to be shown.

As would be gathered from the form in which the thought has already been stated, the "*one spirit*" here indicated is not the Holy Spirit, though of course the influence of the Holy Spirit in bringing about this unity is implied; but it is the accord of mind with mind and heart with heart within this body of believers. They are to have a common will and purpose; common feelings and sympathies and aims; and in this community of will and purpose and feeling and sympathy and aim they are to "*stand fast.*" They are to permit no alienations, but are to be fused and blended into a perfect oneness. They are to be of one spirit and one soul, one in the higher elements of their nature in which they have fellowship with God and receive communications from God, and one in the lower elements of their nature through which outward worldly impressions are made on them, and through which, too, they can exert moral energy and make clear what manner of men they are.

On this subject of unity too much stress cannot be laid. Unity conditions efficiency and growth and comfort.

It is so in the home. It is so in the institution of learning. It is so in the store and mill and mine and on board the ship. It is so in the army. It is so in the party. It is so in the State and in the administration of the affairs of the State. Organizations in which there are mutual suspicions and envies and jealousies, and which are broken up into factions that are all the time intriguing and warring against one another, can neither command the respect of the community nor make progress in their work.

Pre-eminently is this true of a body of believers in Jesus Christ. A badly divided, discordant, wrangling church is about the most offensive, as well as the most inefficient, thing the eye can look upon on the face of the earth. A church in which the sentiment of unity has been displaced by the bitterness of mutual ill will might as well go at once into the hands of a receiver. The days of its usefulness and prosperity are at an end, —at an end, at any rate, until the people change front and come into a better mood. How much harm has been done to individuals, how the advance of our Lord's Kingdom has been hindered, by the unseemly spectacle of disciples arrayed in antagonism.

It is not to be inferred from this that men are to sink their individuality in the common body, and cease to have opinions and aims and feelings of their own. This is neither desirable nor possible. As Robertson has well pointed out, unity consists in the subsistence of things not similar and alike, but things dissimilar and unlike. There is no unity in the separate atoms of

a sand-pit,—only an aggregation or collection of these atoms. Hence he says: "If the different members of each church were similar, one in this, that they all held the same views, all spoke the same words, all viewed truth from the same side, they would have no unity, but would be simply an aggregate of atoms—the sand-pit over again." Unity is not necessarily uniformity. Variety is not necessarily variance. One star differeth from another star in glory; but there is harmony in the movements of these celestial bodies, and each smallest orb lends a splendor to the heavens, and contributes its share to maintain the stability and order of the whole stellar system. Hope lies, not in the suppressing, but in cultivating and using the individualities of men and women. The best music comes, not from using one string, but all the strings of a violin.

But whatever divergence there may be in the opinions of the members of any given church on matters non-essential, and however different these members may be in their natural capacities and training, and in their adaptation to various branches of work, and in their tastes and experiences and estimates of proposed policies of action, nothing is to be thought or said or done in a willful or obstinate temper. Utmost freedom of thought and action and the widest liberty of working according to one's best judgment ought to be granted in a church; but when questions have been discussed and decisions have been reached, and lines of activity entered upon, that should mark the end of all controversy. Resentments, whims, whisperings, grudges, oppositions, alienations, are all out of place in a company of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all members of the body,

being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit." As there is unity in Christ and unity in the divine Spirit, so there is to be unity in the fellowship of disciples. They are to be of one heart and one mind in the Lord.

This is what the apostle wished to see set forth in the conduct of these Philippian Christians. He wanted them to stand fast in one spirit and to strive with one soul for the faith of the Gospel. It must be heart to heart and hand to hand and shoulder to shoulder, not only in holding what they already had, as valiant soldiers hold a captured fort or a conquered territory, but also in aggressive work in behalf of the Gospel. They could make no headway in commending the Gospel to others, or in magnifying it as the saving truth of God, if they themselves were split up into factions, and were biting and devouring each other instead of exemplifying a temper of love and unity. Unity would assure them power. In the spirit of unity they could move forward to conquest. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity."

3. *A third element to enter into this walking to make it worthy of the Gospel is the courage which remains undaunted in the presence of enemies.*

"And in nothing affrighted by the adversaries; which is for them an evident token of perdition; but of your salvation, and that from God." The original of this word "affrighted" has in it the suggestion of the action of a horse in a race, which becomes scared and springs aside and runs off wildly. It is the consternation and dismay of panic. It is getting alarmed and disheart-

ened in the face of some opposing demonstration, or under some fierce assault. It is the timidity and misgiving which says at the outset of the struggle: "It is no use; the enemy is too strong or too cunning; and the surrender might just as well be made now as later on."

Just the opposite of this spirit was what the apostle sought to infuse into the hearts of these beloved disciples at Philippi. They were to be calmly courageous, intrepid, resolute, heroic, true to their convictions, faithful to their Lord, whatever might happen. "In nothing" were they to be "affrighted by the adversaries." The enemy might put on a threatening front and storm down upon them with the fury of satanic hosts; but they were to feel no fear and yield nothing under the shock of even the most determined assault.

These "adversaries" were of two kinds. They were the Jews who turned their backs on Christ, and bitterly opposed the spread of His truth; and the Gentiles who had their own selfish schemes and interests to look after, and who saw that as men were turned from their old ways into these new ways of life they could not be used to gratify avarice, and foster corruption. Masters could not make gains of their soothsaying maids, and silversmiths could not accumulate wealth by manufacturing shrines of Diana.

As there were two classes of adversaries, so Paul named two motives for meeting these adversaries with an heroic and unflinching spirit of resistance. Fearlessness —the courage which dies rather than give up—would make it evident, on the one hand,—evident to themselves if they chose to see it—that God was against these adversaries; and evident, on the other hand, that He was

with these disciples, and shaping events for their salvation. For courage, such as the occasion demanded, would never spring up in the human breast unless it was inspired of God and nourished by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Fearlessness would be the double opportunity of making these enemies see that in fighting against them they were fighting against God, and in fighting against God they were setting their faces toward perdition; and at the same time of re-assuring their own hearts in the faith and love and saving grace of Christ.

But independent of special circumstances courage is a great quality always and everywhere. There are few Christian men and women to whom the exhortation to stand unterrified in the presence of all foes is not pertinent. The high courage which Paul commended to these fellow-disciples over in Macedonia ought to be illustrated by all disciples in all lands. In the social world, in the business world, in the political world, how much it would be worth to the truth, and to all good causes, if every person who has named the name of Christ only had the pluck to be faithful to the principles of the Gospel.

4. *A fourth characteristic of this walking which is to be worthy of the Gospel is willingness to suffer in behalf of Christ.*

" Because to you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf, having the same conflict which ye saw in me and now hear to be in me."

The old battle was still on. The same old foe was still to be met. Victory could be won only at the same

cost of pain and tears, and possibly of blood. These last words of the clause just quoted—"having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me," were designed to remind the Philippian Christians of Paul's own experience in their city when he was visited with scourging and imprisonment, and also of what should be told them by Epaphroditus of his present straitness in Rome.

It was his wish that they might catch this spirit, and be ready, not only to believe on Christ but also to submit to humiliation, and bear burdens, and endure afflictions and losses and pass through any bitter experiences which God might appoint, that Christ might be exalted and the knowledge of Him spread among men.

It is not to be overlooked here that Paul speaks of this suffering as a privilege—as a favor granted of God. This is what the apostles, who had been apprehended by the Council, and finally allowed to go, felt. "They therefore departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name." Men and women often shrink from such experiences of burden-bearing and toil, and wonder why God appoints such hardness to their lot, when God Himself means it to be a privilege.

Nothing gets on without suffering by somebody. Every life holds in it a history of agony and watchfulness and care. The record of every civilized people on the globe is a record inwrought with the stains of blood. The Church of Jesus Christ has come to its present estate of power and influence in virtue of countless labors and sacrifices. When men are no longer willing to suffer for the progress of the truth and the growth of human-

ity, they are out of line with Christ, and out of line with the multitude of consecrated souls who have lived and died for Christ through the generations.

But the sufferers, while helping the truth by their sufferings, do not suffer without compensation. They have their reward. Mr. Beecher, in one of his incomparable illustrations, says: "I know enough of gardening to understand that, if I would have a tree grow upon its south side, I must cut off the branches there. Then all its forces go to repairing the injury, and twenty buds shoot out, where otherwise, there would have been but one. When we reach the garden above we shall find that, out of those very wounds over which we sighed and groaned on earth, have sprung verdant branches, bearing precious fruit a thousandfold." It is through sacrifice that liberty and righteousness and all highest interests are set forward; and it is through sacrifice that souls grow.

"The highest benedictions hide
Where sacrifice is pure and true
And our poor self-denials, too,
If done for Christ, in Him abide."

Unity Through Love.

"If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, fulfil ye my joy, and be ye of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; *doing* nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others."—*Phil. 2: 1-4.*

VI.

UNITY THROUGH LOVE.

The working idea of this tender passage is: *Unity Through Love.*

But a little examination shows us that the words fall into three distinct divisions, and have to be considered from three distinct points of view.

1. *First we have an appeal.*

"Fulfill ye my joy." This is in the second verse, and is the pivot over which the section plays. Paul introduced the personal element into his request in order that he might lend an additional persuasiveness to the motives he was to bring forward for the doing of certain things about to be specified. It is very much as if he had said: "My delight in you in the past has been keen; your course has given me intense satisfaction; I am exceedingly glad in you now; but let me entreat you to take a step forward in this same path, put me under the bonds of a still deeper gratitude, and fill my cup of joy to the brim by doing what is here pointed out to you."

But while the appeal is thus personal in form, it must not be supposed for a moment that Paul had no higher end in view in the request he was making than his own gratification; or that he regarded his own wishes as a sufficient and final reason for what he urged. He was like a parent who, in speaking to his children, or a minister in laying some interest on his congregation, says: "For my sake, do this, please."

It is never meant in such instances that the personal factor which is introduced into the appeal is the only and chief ground for granting what is asked. It is simply a way of increasing the force of words by putting into them the affectionate warmth of an individual heart. There was this delicate reference to what they knew was his tender and profound regard for them, and to what he knew was their tender and profound regard for him, that his suggestions might not be wanting in full effectiveness.

Nevertheless the force of the passage turns on this personal appeal, and in studying it this is the point at which, if we are to reach intelligent conculusions, it is necessary for us to begin.

2. *Second, we have the motives for heeding this appeal which the apostle makes.*

This takes us back to the first verse of the passage, which reads: "If there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions." Or to throw the statement into a style of expression which it would be more natural for us to use, and which would be more readily understood: "By whatever comfort there is in Christ, and by whatever consolation there is in love, and by whatever fellowship there is in the Spirit, and by whatever tender mercies and compassions Christian hearts are wont to feel," "fulfill ye my joy." By these, in virtue of these, constrained by these,—this comfort, this consolation, this fellowship, these tender mercies and compassions, go out and illustrate the high Christian qualities which are about to be named.

Here, it will be perceived, are four distinct motives.

(1) The first is the motive which is drawn from

whatever comfort there is in Christ. It ought to be said, however, that this word "*comfort*," though it is the word used in the New Version, hardly expresses the apostle's precise thought. Neither does the word "consolation," which we have in the Old Version. The idea rather is "exhortation" or "persuasiveness." "If there is therefore any 'exhortion,' or 'persuasiveness,' or 'constraining force,' in Christ." Or to put it in still another fashion: "If there is anything in your experience in Christ which takes hold of you and to which an appeal can be made, then I beg you let me remind you of this, and by all the sweet energy and motive power of it, beseech you to go on and do what is here sought at your hand." Paul went on the basis that in appealing to the experience of disciples in Christ, he was touching the spring of a high motive to action.

(2) The second is the motive which is found in whatever consolation there is in love. But it needs to be understood that the word "*consolation*," as here used, leans toward the special kind of consolation which is experienced in encouragement. It is as though the apostle had said: "Inasmuch as it belongs to genuine love to encourage and strengthen those for whom it is cherished, let it be the office of this affection you feel for me to lead you to the fulfilling of my wish." The appeal is a tender but powerful one. It is of the same nature and lies in the same plane as the test applied by our Lord: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The love which is known to be felt for one ought never to be ground of a plea for doing that which is not right; but it may well be called in and made the motive of appeal for doing right and worthy things.

(3) The third is the motive which has its founda-

tion in the "fellowship of the Spirit." To one who has any fit appreciation of the services of the Spirit in convicting of sin, and guiding into the truth of Jesus Christ, and renewing the life by His divine breath, and sustaining spirituality in the soul by His indwelling power, the fellowship of the Spirit will seem to be something very sacred. To call this fellowship to mind, and to intimate that redeemed men have their fellowship one with another in virtue of this fellowship of the Spirit, is to invoke a consideration of vast weight. These brethren to whom Paul wrote must have understood him as saying: "If your fellowship of the Spirit is a reality, and it is worth anything to you, then you will show your sense of its value by making it an incentive to an unbroken and lively fellowship with me in what I am seeking."

(4) The fourth is the motive which has its location in their own tender mercies and compassions. The use of these two words, "mercies" and "compassions" serve to emphasize the thought. The appeal is to the hearts of these fellow-disciples. The apostle seeks their sympathy in his present condition and in his aims. Very naturally he feels that he has a right to their sympathy. To withhold it in the circumstances would be unkind and cruel. But if they are in accord with him their sympathies will be touched; or if they have such feelings as are wont to spring up in the soul through the love of Christ and the presence of the Divine Spirit, then they will move forward in the way he points out, and count it their joy to fulfil his joy in illustrating the Christian traits and discharging the Christian duties which he conceives to be so important to the Philippian Church.

As others have said it will be seen that these four motives fall into two pairs or classes of motives. The first pair includes the first and the third motive just specified, namely, "comfort in Christ," and "fellowship of the Spirit," or the motives which lie outside of us, and are divine. The second pair includes the second and fourth motives just specified, namely, the "consolation of love," and "tender mercies and compassions," or the motives which are inside of us, and which derive their force from the feelings which are awakened and the new and higher laws of action which are set up by the work of the Holy Spirit and the constraining and elevating presence of Christ in the soul. In virture of what is wrought for us by divine influence on the one hand, and in virtue of what we ourselves come to think and feel and be, under this influence on the other hand, we are to act.

3. *We have the object for which this appeal is made and these motives are brought forward by the apostle.*

"That ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory but in lowliness of mind, each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you on his own things, but each of you also to the things of the others."

Technically, or so far as form goes, we have seen that the object of the appeal made is the filling up of the apostle's joy. "Fulfil ye my joy." But this joy was to have its realization in the ends just indicated. The consideration, therefore, of what is merely personal to the apostle need not keep us any longer.

What Paul was after was good feeling among these Philippian believers. "*The same mind*"; "*the same*

love"; "one accord";—this is what he wanted. We get at it with our own significant word—unity. The unity of the Church, and especially of this beloved church, was a thought always present in his mind, and a desire always near his heart. In the preceding chapter we have seen how he thanked God for the fellowship of these brethren with him in his efforts to extend the Gospel, and how he longed to hear they were standing fast in one spirit, and were striving with one soul for the faith. Here he returns to this burden of his heart, and by all the regard they have for him, and by all that is tender and sacred or constraining in their experience of Christ and the Divine Spirit, and in the love and compassion into which they have been brought, he begs them to cultivate and maintain a true Christian unity. "That ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory." It is to be unity in thought and unity in sentiment and unity in method and unity in aim.

Not a few people are staggered by this suggestion of unity in thought. A year or two since, at a very important gathering, a minister of considerable standing and influence took it upon himself to say that the Word of God nowhere requires men to think alike. One of the writers on this passage now before us says: "The apostle appeals to various motives for the maintenance of *unanimity* in the Church. But the unanimity which he seeks is moral rather than intellectual. It is not *uniformity*, but only the possession of a common center, around which each one moves in a common love, which, however, may exhibit different degrees of strength and purity in different individuals, just as centripetal force

is capable of manifold gradations." But it is worth while to notice that the apostle says distinctly: "that ye be of the same mind." Not content with saying it once, in the very next clause but one, he says it over again: "*of one mind*."

Unquestionably the object of this "sameness of mind" and this "oneness of mind" is ethical, and the temper of it is to be spiritual and sympathetic. But it is just as unquestionable that the apostle wishes for agreement or harmony in intellectual views and conclusions. Mere toleration of opinion, mere sympathy, does not satisfy him. He seeks the union of soul which is contemplated by these expressions,—"be of the same mind," "having the same love," "being of one accord," "of one mind,"—the union of soul in which men become like-minded, or rather one-minded, and in a certain sense think each other's thoughts, and live each other's lives, and rise into the enthusiasm of common ends and common aspirations.

Now this is very far from saying that one man must sink his own thinking into another man's thinking, or permit his individuality of mind to be swallowed up in the multitude of other minds. My views, whatever they may be, are to be forced on nobody else; and nobody else is to force his views, whatever they may be, on me. No institution, no council, no assembly, no pope, may override my own honest opinions and convictions, and with what are assumed to be authoratative edicts come between me and God. Each man is bound to do his best to find the truth, and then he is bound, to speak after the manner of Mr. Lincoln, to follow truth as God gives him to see the truth. This between men and men.

Still there is a possible unity of view which it is ex-

ceedingly desirable to reach, and which would be, were it reached, not to the discredit, but to the real exaltation of the individual mind. It is the unity which results from having, not your views as against mine, nor mine as against yours, but right views.

When two men have exactly right views about a problem in Euclid or the multiplication table, they will think alike about the problem in Euclid or the multiplication table. When two have exactly right views about God they will think alike about God. When two men have exactly right views about Christ, and about the nature and mission of the Holy Spirit, and about the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and about the new birth, and about the kind of life a redeemed soul ought to live here on the earth, and about the hope faith in Christ justifies us in cherishing, they will think alike on all these vital questions. This is the basis of a substantial and abiding unity in thought. There can be no unity on wrong views of truth, and only approximate unity on partial views of truth. But when things are seen in the clear light of the heavenly atmosphere, and from the standpoint of eternal verity, then the thoughts of men will flow together, and there will be oneness of mind.

But what are the methods by which at one and the same time this unity of thought and sentiment is to be secured and illustrated? The apostle names four,—four ways in which this unity may be both helped and shown.

(1) First by doing nothing through faction. The party spirit, particularly in a Church, is always a mischievous spirit. It destroys peace and harmony. The moment a man falls into a factious temper, and thinks

not so much of getting on himself, as hindering somebody else from getting on, and not so much of promoting good ends as opposing them in a spirit of sheer wilfulness, and makes it his chief business to object and find fault, he becomes an element of discord to everybody with whom he may be identified. If there is to be any real unity—unity of mind and heart, then the disposition to be self-assertive and to strive on all occasions, must be crucified.

(2) Second by doing nothing through vainglory. Or in other words by doing nothing from motives of personal vanity and show. Paul had a deep rooted and settled aversion—as everybody ought to have,—to anything like an empty-headed and strutting actor on the religious stage. In his epistle to the Galatians, there is a little paragraph which reads: "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk. Let us not be vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another." Jesus, it will be remembered, has a very striking warning against doing righteousness to be seen of men. One can have some respect for pride; but vanity is the emptiest and most contemptible motive from which a man can well act. When one undertakes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and to live out his Christian life, in a temper of vainglorioussness, he is running dead against the whole current of the teaching and spirit of the Gospel of Christ.

Putting the two together, party spirit and vainglory, and showing the harm they do in common, and at the same time contrasting them, it may be said that party spirit misuses and wrongs men in order to carry out its own aims, while vainglory misuses its own possessions and those of the world to glorify its lust for attention;

that party spirit presses others down in order to raise itself up, while vainglory becomes hollow and empty and worthless in efforts to please others and draw out from them tributes of praise; that party spirit, sooner or later, is sure to work destruction to whatever it touches, while vainglory is a butterfly which flits back and forth so long as the sunshine of popular favor lasts, and then folds its wings and dies.

Vainglory, like party spirit, must give way to worthy motives and aims, if one's actions are either to help or to exhibit the exalted principles of Christian unity.

(3) By manifesting humility of mind. "But in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself." This is the direct opposition of the factious spirit, and the vainglorious spirit, against which we are so earnestly warned. Self-conceit, self-assertion, self-seeking, are all deadly foes, not only to unity of thought and feeling, but also to high efficiency in the service of the Master, and it is only by displacing them with the humility of mind which recognizes ability and merit in others, that there can be harmony and progress. We do not become great through the exhibition of party spirit and personal vanity but through submission and reverence and obedience. We do not advance to high planes in the moral world by clamoring and intriguing for them, but by taking our places at the bottom and waiting and working there till the call comes to go up higher. If we are humble, God can use us; but if we are opinionated and airy and inclined to think we are made of a little better clay than the ordinary mortal, though He can still use us, it is very hard for Him to do it effectually, except as examples of arrogance and folly. Humility conditions more excellencies than we think. Indeed is not this a

characteristic of the Christian—that he does not think highly of himself, but is disposed always to put a high estimate on the ability and qualities of others, and to esteem them for their virtues? Does not the true Christian, in the catholicity of a true Christian spirit, rejoice to see and acknowledge excellencies in those who are about him? If we only looked at ourselves with the keen eyes and searching judgments with which we look at others, and weighed our own demerits in the scales in which we weigh the demerits of those who are associated with us in Christian work it would be less difficult to be humble.

(4) By consenting to give the interests of others a fair share of recognition in our thoughts and aims. "Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others."

There is a Christian Socialism. There is a Christian Communism. There is a Christian Brotherhood. It is not the Socialism of the Anarchist which aims to secure equality of rights and possessions by overturning and burning and destroying promiscuously. It is not the Communism of an Oneida Community which aims to put all on a level in the ownership of property by blotting out the primary distinctions and obligations of social morality. It is not the Brotherhood of the Industrial Organization which aims to show the fraternal spirit by breaking the heads of hungry men for no other reason than that they wish by honest industry to earn support for themselves and wives and little ones.

It is the Socialism and Communism and Brotherhood of Christ; or the Socialism and Communism and Brotherhood which have love for their germ centers, and "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you,"

for their governing principles. The plague of souls and the plague of communities, and the plague of churches, is selfishness. To displace selfishness with love; to get men to be willing to take into consideration the welfare of others as well as their own interests would be to insure the personal prosperity of every institution and every organization, which has been set up for the good of mankind. Men are to look after their own interests; but if they are Christian men, and are acting on a Christian basis, they will look beyond their own interests, and consider carefully and tenderly the bearing of their actions on the interests of their fellows.

The key-note, therefore, of this unity is love. If there is love enough to keep down the factious spirit, and to shame vainglory into the background, and to inspire a proper humility, and to make one considerate of the interests of others, there will be little difficulty in securing a working unity of thought and sentiment and aim and aspiration. These great motives of the comfort in Christ and the consolation of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit, and the tender mercies and compassions which swell hearts in all true Christians, will have their way, and there will be a splendid exhibition of thorough union and oneness of soul.

How essential is this unity to the success of any church. How much even the smallest church can do if only it is provided with this thought and sentiment of unity. How little it is possible for even the largest church to do if there be no harmony and sense of fellowship in the members. Ambitions, jealousies, envyings, selfish plottings, whisperings, oppositions,—they are bad enough anywhere, and they are destructive everywhere; but it is a shame even to think of them in connection

with a church of Jesus Christ. Love is the life of any church. Love is the bond of union of any church. Love conditions the prosperity of any church. The exhortation is always appropriate, and there is no exhortation more appropriate than that—we love one another.

"Love is the incense which doth sweeten earth."

Christ in His Condescension and Exaltation.

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in Heaven and *things* on earth and *things* under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—*Phil. 2:5-11.*

VII.

CHRIST IN HIS CONDESCENSION AND EXALTATION.

We are now to consider one of the most sublime and impressive themes ever contemplated by man: *Christ in His Condescension and Exaltation.*

This very remarkable statement was brought forward by the apostle to enforce and illustrate the unselfishness he was urging upon the members of the beloved Church at Philippi. Never was an object so worthy supported by an argument so august. Never can indifference to the welfare of others, and self-seeking and personal ambition and greed and envy and jealousy and scheming for undue advantage, seem so out of place and contemptible, as in presence of the example of Him who descended from the highest heights of glory to the lowest depths of humiliation and suffering, that He might lift men out of the defilement and guilt and bondage of sin.

In tenderly and reverently contemplating our Lord in the light in which this great passage portrays Him, it will be necessary to look at Him from three different points of view.

1. *First of all Christ is here presented to us in the majesty of an eternal pre-existence.*

This is the conception of Christ with which the paragraph now under review sets out. "Who being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself."

Take the first clause,—"being in the form of God." To

begin with, this word "being"—"being in the form of God"—is so placed in the original sentence as to lay stress on the reality of existence. But it is in this word "form"—"the form of God"—that the idea of divinity is most securely imbedded. Those who have studied the history of the word here translated "form" and have traced its use through the New Testament, tell us that it means more than mere shape or fashion or the outline which strikes the eye, and has to do with the essence or inner quality. To be in the "form" of God is to have an inward and substantial likeness to God. Hence to speak of Christ after this manner is to assert His participation in the Godhead.

Take the second clause, "Counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God." This clause in the Old Version reads, "Thought it not robbery to be equal with God." As all the scholars know great difficulty has been experienced in arriving at a satisfactory interpretation of these words. At bottom the question has been whether the underlying thought of the Old Version or the New is a correct one. In other words the question has been whether the apostle meant to represent our Lord as maintaining a claim to divine privileges and dignity, or as gladly giving up divine privileges and dignity, to which He might, in virtue of His exalted nature, justly hold fast. The whole drift of the apostle's argument, as well as the conclusions of highest scholarship, requires that we take the latter view, and think of our Lord, not as asserting, but as surrendering the glory which was His because of His identification with God in His pre-existent and divine form.

But practically the result is the same. While according to one view the divinity of Christ is directly as-

serted, yet it is just as clearly implied in the other view. For surely it would have been no sign of humility in our Lord, not to avow His equality with God, if He had no equality with God. It would have been arrogance and blasphemous presumption, but not humility. The language employed carries with it the idea of divinity, and it can be made to yield nothing less than divinity, without doing violence to established laws of interpretation. The exact thought seems to be: Though before the incarnation our Lord existed, and existed in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as something to which He must cling at all hazards, but rather as a glory to be relinquished in order that through this relinquishment He might come into the new and higher joy of giving salvation to men in the darkness and degradation and guilt of sin.

Take the third clause, "but emptied Himself." This is the New Version. The Old Version reads: "but made Himself of no reputation." But the New Version seems the better of the two. For this conveys to us what is undoubtedly the precise notion that was in the apostle's mind, namely, that Christ emptied Himself of His glory—the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He gave up His true form—"the form of God"—that He might for a season and for high redemptive purposes, take on "the form of a servant." Voluntarily, by a self-imposed act, He let go, not His divine nature; for He was always and everywhere divine; but the glories and prerogatives of His divine nature, as He enjoyed them in His pre-existent state, and for a little while tabernacled in the flesh. But this emptying of Himself implies an original divine nature—a divine glory which He could surrender. Otherwise,

the self-emptying can have no meaning pertinent to the case in hand. The passage clearly teaches the pre-existent and divine dignity.

But this explanation of the significance of the several clauses of the passage is abundantly vindicated and fortified by the teachings of other Scriptures. On this great doctrine of the pre-existence and divine nature of Christ there is a majestic harmony in the New Testament writings.

How sublime is the tribute to our Lord which the apostle pays in his words to the Colossians. Cannon Liddon says of this passage that it is "perhaps the most exhaustive assertion of our Lord's Godhead to be found in the writings of Paul." Here is the statement: "Who is *the image of the invisible God*, the first-born of all creation; for *in Him* were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created *through Him* and *unto Him;* and he is before all things, and *in Him* all things consist." There is no question in this language of the pre-existence and essential divinity and eternal majesty and measureless power of Christ.

In the same line are those great words in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "His Son, whom He hath appointed heir to all things, through whom also He made the world; who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power." To crown all is that marvelous ascription of Godhead in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Christ was and is

the Eternal Word. Before He appeared in the ranks of our humanity, before there was any humanity, He existed within the being of God, not as a thought merely, but as a person. He was God manifest in the flesh. He could say of Himself: "Before Abraham was, I am." All fulness of divinity was in Him—the sufficiency, the wisdom, the power, and the holiness of God.

Moreover there is no other adequate explanation of Christ than to think of Him as pre-existent and divine. To regard Him as merely a man, even though it be admitted that He is the highest specimen of a man the race has ever produced, eminent above all others in moral genius and purity and insight and love, is to be without a key to unlock the mystery of His character and might and limitless influence on the ages. His teachings, His miracles, the regenerating energy with which He has entered into the lives of individuals and communities; His tremendous transforming force, and the way unprecedented in which He has swept thought and literature and art and discovery and all the highest activities of the Christian centuries into subordination to His aims, are wholly unaccountable save on the theory of His divinity.

A Christ simply human could not have created Christendom. To explain the setting up of Christianity in the world, with what it demands, with what it has had to encounter, and with the claim it has put forth from the outset, on any other basis than that Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, is to fly in the face of all reasonable probabilities. As was said in substance by Jean Paul Richter, with His pierced hands He has lifted empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries into new channels, and is still governing the

ages. One who can do this may well inspire us as a Being possessed of attributes and powers which take Him quite out of the category of mere men. He had His wisdom, and He did His mighty works, because He was God manifest in the flesh.

2. *Christ is here presented to us in the condescension and self-sacrifice of a divine love.*

He comes into human form, and takes His place beside us in the circle of our human brotherhood—"taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

Here we have the two sublime doctrines of Christianity—the Incarnation and the Crucifixion; Bethlehem and Calvary; God coming down out of heaven in the form of His Son to reveal His infinite love to us; and this Son dying there on the uplifted tree that He might at one and the same time express the divine sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and open a way of escape from sin.

This wonderful statement of the case by Paul is but another way of telling the old, old story of redeeming grace as it comes to us in the immortal words of John: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Only as Paul puts it before us, it is not the devotement in an atoning sacrifice of the Son by the Father; but it is the Son freely offering Himself to humiliation and suffering and death. "He emptied Himself." He was in "the form of God"; but this "form" He voluntarily surrendered. He took the form of a servant. He was made in the likeness of

men. But He did not stop even at this stage of self-abnegation. He humbled Himself still further. He became obedient unto death; not an ordinary death either, but the death of the cross. He loved us and gave Himself for us. He had a glory with the Father before the world was; but He laid this glory aside that He might do the Father's will in seeking and saving the lost. He was rich with an incalculable wealth of divine dignity and power; but for our sakes He became poor that we through His poverty might become rich. He was sinless; yet in some mysterious but effective way He consented to bear our sins in His own body. Needing no redemption Himself, nevertheless He consented to redeem us from the curse of the law by becoming somehow a curse for us. It is a story to be told, not with pens dipped in ink, but with pens dipped in tears and blood. For what is there like it—this condescending love of the Son of God which pauses not till it finds expression in the agonies of the cross?

"He emptied Himself." He gave up His glory. He laid aside His robes of divine dignity and put on our earthly garments of flesh. He became bone of our bone, and blood of our blood, and life of our life. A sovereign, He dropped down into a subject, and became a servant to obey and do the will of God. In the form of God, He yet entered into our likeness. It was not at the top of humanity, either, that He took His place, but at the bottom. His contacts and affiliations in society were not with the rich, but the poor. He belonged to the toiling, burden-bearing, self-denying peasant class. He had not where to lay His head, after He entered on His ministry, save as loving disciples opened their doors and extended hospitality to Him. Nor was it, again, to

find such satisfaction as might be gathered out of an earthly life that He was here amongst us; but to suffer, to experience pain and shame, and to die. It was all for sinners—the Worthy giving up His life for the unworthy; the Pure and Guiltless making expiation for the inpure and guilty.

What a story it is when we fairly get hold of it, or rather, when it fairly gets hold of us. Everything elevated which is done in a vicarious spirit interests and moves us. We are touched always and often melted by the story of a mother's devotion to her child. The birth-pangs, the weary night-watchings, the anxieties and solicitudes, of the average mother are enough to soften all hearts into tender reverence at the mention of the name. He is no true patriot who can consent to enjoy the privileges of liberty and law and order, and to accept advantages for his own prosperity and happiness, with never a grateful thought sent back to the brave men who made their own breasts targets for the enemies' bullets, or who secured an established system of free institutions, by awful pangs and sacrifices. Doing and dying for others always stir our souls to admiration.

He was One who had no sins of His own to confess or to be delivered from—One who walked in secure and eternal communion with the Father, who yet, out of pure love, in a spirit purely vicarious, left all the glory of heaven and the association and satisfaction of life with God and in God, came down to us, and put Himself on a level with us in our humanity, and submitted to the limitations of an earthly life that He might help us —might show us the Father's love, might show us how offensive and hurtful sin is, might show us how to

get rid of sin and be at peace with ourselves, and at peace with God, and at peace with our environment. Is it possible to think of all this without being touched and moved? Is it possible for God to come out toward us in this way, and we not go out toward Him?

3. *Christ is here presented to us in His divine exaltation.*

He was in the form of God, and on an equality with God in the substance and glory of His being; but He emptied Himself, and exchanged this form of God for the form of a servant. He became incarnate and suffered and died,—the Righteous for the unrighteous that He might bring the unrighteous to God. But when He had been offered once for all for sin, and had completed His great atoning work on Calvary, then it was granted to Him to ascend into the heavens, and resume His true dignity and power. "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

As is well known the latter clauses of this passage,—"that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," have been interpreted in a controversial spirit, and made to do service, so far as they might, to the claim of a final restoration of all souls, everywhere, to an accredited standing in the righteousness and peace of God. These words point, it is said, to a willing and true worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. If this be the

fact of the case and the worship be true and willing, then, of course, it necessarily follows that the worshippers are in sympathy with Christ. They have laid aside their opposition, and, in the spirit of a genuine loyalty, have acknowledged Him, and come into a loving subjection to His will.

While it is not advisable to go into this at any length, it is yet a matter of sufficient interest and importance to justify the bringing forward of the opinion of a man whom all will admit to be a competent authority in New Testament exegesis. President Dwight of Yale University, in the note with which he accompanies this passage in Meyer's Commentary, says: "The main thought of verses ten and eleven—'every knee should bow . . . and every tongue confess,'—for the expression of which they were written, is evidently that of the exaltation of Christ, and not that of the union of all intelligent beings with Him as willing subjects. This fact must be borne in mind in the consideration of any points in these verses, which may appear to indicate such voluntary subjection on the part of all. In view of this fact, also, the inquirer as to Paul's doctrine of the future should carefully examine all his statements on the subject, and should discover in the present passage only what it clearly affirms. The Pauline view of Christ's exaltation can be proved from these verses. What the Pauline view of the eternal condition of man is to be, must be sought for in other passages taken in connection with this one, and not in this one alone." This is the utterance of a thoroughly qualified and a thoroughly candid scholar. To one in search of light on this statement of the apostle, or to one disposed to place too much stress on a certain

interpretation of this statement, this comment of Dr. Dwight will be valuable.

Now as bearing on the point of a willing and true acknowledgment of the sovereignty of Christ at some time in the coming ages by all intelligent creatures in all the universe, call in such a passage as the one found in the first chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians where Paul speaks of "the righteous judgment of God," and being "counted worthy of the Kingdom," and of "the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ" when He shall come "from heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire," to render "vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus; who," as he goes on to say, "shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believe in that day." We must compare spiritual things with spiritual, and look at questions on all sides before we venture to be too positive in our conclusions. This applies to each and all of us together.

The simple fact is that in this instance Paul was laying all the stress at his command on the exaltation of our Divine Lord. He saw the name Jesus lifted into superiority to every other name. He saw all knees bend in acknowledgment of the sovereignty of Jesus. He heard all tongues breaking out in a mighty chorus of confession that Jesus was and is and ever shall be Lord. Willing or unwilling, constrained or unconstrained, in gladness of heart or in fear and trembling, rational creatures could not withhold their homage from Him

whose title is and ever shall be "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." In adoring wonder he looked up and he saw Jesus, attracting to Himself the acknowledgment of the universe.

Thus in the representation here made of our Lord by the apostle we have what the devout Neander has felicitously called "*The Whole Christ.*" We have Christ in the glory of His pre-existence, when He was in the form of God, and one in equality with God. We have Christ in His humiliation, when He was on the earth, under the self-imposed limitations of a servant, bearing the sins of a lost race in His own body, and dying for all mankind on the cross. We have Christ in His divine exaltation, by the resurrection and ascension restored to His place of dignity at the right hand of God. We have Christ coming down to us out of the heavens; and Christ here in the world, walking back and forth with us in the sweetness and power of an inexhaustible love, and Christ going back in triumph to the Father.

But in every aspect in which He is presented to us He takes hold of our hearts. If we think of Him in the majesty and glory of His pre-existent state He awes us into profound reverence. If we think of Him in the flesh, going about doing good, unstopping deaf ears, opening blind eyes, healing the palsied, restoring the dead to life, guiding and enlightening the ignorant, bending down in the tenderness of a divine sympathy over the degraded and outcast, and dying for sin, He wins our love. If we think of Him as the risen Lord, seated at the right hand of God, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, He draws us to Him in trust; for we know He is the same

there He was here. He is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.

He is a glorious Christ. It is glorious to be saved by the precious blood of Christ. It is glorious to be His disciple, and sit at His feet, and learn the great lessons of Christ. It is glorious to be in the fellowship of Christ. It is glorious to overcome evil in the name and power of Christ. It is glorious to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. It is glorious to be a co-worker with Christ in establishing His Kingdom of righteousness and love in the world. It is glorious to look forward to the open vision and unobstructed communion of Christ in yonder heavens. It is glorious to feel that one may have some intelligent and voluntary part by and by in the voices of the multitudes who ascribe blessing and honor and glory and dominion unto Him who sits upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

Developing and Illustrating Spiritual Life.

"So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life; that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain. Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all: and in the same manner do ye also joy, and rejoice with me."—*Phil. 2:12–18.*

VIII.

DEVELOPING AND ILLUSTRATING SPIRITUAL LIFE.

The "so then" or "wherefore," with which the passage now to be considered begins, takes us back to the preceding verses of the chapter. But the exhortation here so tenderly and earnestly voiced, derives its peculiar coloring, not from all that has gone before, but from the words which refer to the suffering and exaltation of Christ. With such a fact behind them as the Son of God voluntarily emptying Himself of His divinity, and taking the form of a servant, and dying on the cross, and then rising again and ascending to His true place at the right hand of God, to be the basis of hope and the motive to action, these disciples at Philippi might well be expected to do their utmost to reach and exemplify a high type of Christian character. It was to the realization of this that the apostle urged them. Falling into line with what seems to be the central teaching of this section of Scripture, we have for our present theme: *Developing and Illustrating Spiritual Life.*

I. *The first point looking to the development and illustration of spiritual life named and pressed by the apostle has to do with the working out of individual salvation.*

After addressing these disciples in terms of endearment,—"my beloved" and then going on to declare in words of hearty commendation that as they had always been obedient—obedient to God, that is,—in his presence,

or when he was amongst them, he had no doubt they would be much more intent on doing God's will in his absence from them,—"even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence," he strikes right into the heart of the business in hand by saying: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure."

Here we have the recognition of two facts which have been the occasion of endless controversy and much bitterness in the theological world. These two facts are the free agency of man and the sovereignty of God; the responsibility of man and his dependence on God. The men to whom the apostle wrote were charged to work out their own salvation; but at the same time they were reminded that it is God who works in them both to will and to work. Men are at liberty to choose, and they are under obligation to choose,—to choose God and to follow Him; but the initiative lies with God. When men move out toward righteousness it will be found always that it is God who has set the faculties in motion and stirred spiritual impulses in the heart.

A thought exactly in line with this is found back near the beginning of the epistle: "being confident of this very thing that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ." "He which began a good work in you." It was God who "began" it. Not themselves, but God.

So it is here. "Work" it out. "Work out your own salvation." It has been "begun" in you. God "began" it. Carry it on, as you surely may with His help, unto a triumphant completeness. Men will not choose God, and they will not follow God, without His suggestion

and aid; but it is just as true that God cannot work effectually in men and have His glorious way with them, unless men also will co-work with God. It takes them both. "Work out your own salvation . . . for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work." The disposition is of God. The ability is of God. But it belongs to us to act in concert with divinely awakened inclinations, and to use the grace God bestows to bring the life into conformity to His will.

Does not this statement of the case involve a paradox? Certainly. But what of it? Is it not impossible, on the basis of any logic of which we are masters, to reconcile the two claims of human free agency and divine sovereignty? Certainly. But what of it? Facts are facts even though we cannot adjust them to each other in the inter-play of a perfect harmony. Our stupid inability to understand how things can be, or cannot be, does not alter existing orders and existing relations either in the natural or moral world.

A bright teacher said to her class of bright boys a Sunday or two since, with a view, no doubt, to pressing home the thought of the divine omnipresence: "Is there any place where God is not?" One young lad quietly but confidently answered: "Yes." "Where is it?" "In the devil." The lad was right, God is not in the devil. But is not God everywhere? Yes. Then is not God in the devil? No. God is not in the devil. Very well, how explain an inconsistency so apparent and striking? I do not explain it. I do not care to explain it. There are some things in our own souls, some things in the laws under which we live, some things in this vast outer world in which we move, some things in our relation to what is remote and invisible,

whose secrets elude us, and which finite beings here and now cannot expect fully to comprehend; and I am glad of it. I do not want a God whom I can take up in my arms, and know all through and through in a little lifetime. I want a larger God. I do not want a universe whose economics and methods I can take in within the narrow period of three score years or three score and ten. I want a larger universe; I want a universe that will keep challenging me with mystery upon mystery forever, and that will keep unfolding to me glory upon glory—the glory of God and the glory of God's Kingdom—through the endless ages.

Man's free agency is a fact. God's sovereignty, working on the human soul, not after the manner of an arbitrary decree, but in the way of a forerunning grace, is a fact. Both are facts. Both are facts, too, which are brought into requisition, as they need to be, in connection with the great interest of our salvation. Men are to work out their own salvation. They are to work it out with "fear and trembling," with a tender solicitude, that is, and a conscientious fidelity to all duties having any bearing on this working out of their salvation. But they are to do it in the consciousness that God first set them in the way of salvation; and in the assurance that He will help with His measureless resources to the end. This is what men are to find in the sovereignty of God—at any rate what good men are to find—encouragement. God uses His sovereignty to help men. God's motive, we are here told, is His own good pleasure. But God's good pleasure, be it always remembered, is pleasure in good.

II. *The second point looking to the development and illustration of spiritual life named and pressed by the*

apostle, has to do with habits and actions which will mark the followers of Christ as true children of God.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation."

This is wholesome counsel. But as is implied in the proposition just stated, it all culminates in being "children of God." This is the high-water mark of the apostle's aspiration in behalf of these beloved fellow-believers—that they may be "children of God." He appears to be able to think of nothing higher for them, nothing better, and of nothing more imperative and promising in usefulness in the circumstances in which they were then placed than to be "children of God."

Observe with a little more closeness some of the qualities which were to characterize the conduct of the Philippian disciples, if they were to meet the apostle's wishes and be genuine children of God.

1. First they were to "do all things without murmurings and disputings." "Murmurings" stand for all sorts of ill-concealed, half-checked, and half-uttered complaints. They are the low grumblings of a man who is swayed inwardly by impatient thoughts and hard feelings. "Disputings are murmurings come to the surface and breaking out in captious and angry discussions. These words are susceptible of other renderings and they have other shades of meaning in other circumstances; but this is what they mean here: 'Do not fall away into discontented moods, and do not indulge in acrimonious debates over what you have to do, but be sweet tempered and conciliatory and agreeable.'"

The particular words here employed were suggested

to the apostle no doubt by the familiar incident in Israelitish history when the people broke out into a passion of fault-finding, and Moses told them that the Lord heard their murmurings against Him. Hence the advice to "do all things without murmurings and disputings" has a bearing on the attitude to be sustained toward God as well as toward men. They are not to harbor bad feelings toward God, nor to criticize His dealings with them, nor the requirements He imposes upon them. But the chief reference is to the temper in which they are to carry themselves in their contact with men. Only in this way—by the suppression of murmurings and disputings—could these cherished disciples hope to maintain the unity which was so desirable, and to show that they were children of God.

2. Second, they were to be "blameless and harmless." "Blameless," as here used, means substantially what we are accustomed to associate with the word. To be "blameless" is to be without fault or stain. It is to be correct in all the externals of life. It is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth—a very great thing by the way, to be said of any man and his wife—that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances *blameless*." It was the desire of the apostle that these brethren should meet all their duties and discharge all their obligations and carry themselves in all their intercourse with their fellow-Christians and their fellow-men in an irreproachable manner. "Harmless" has a more inward look and refers to the internal purity and simplicity and sincerity which ought to characterize all followers of Christ. To be "harmless" is to have the innocence of character which has no admixture of evil thought or desire in it.

Thus these Philippian disciples were to be outwardly and inwardly correct—outwardly correct that they might bring no hindrance nor scandal to the name of Christ and to His Church; and inwardly correct because no mere outward correctness can long be maintained without inward correctness. Blamelessness and harmlessness are distinguishing marks of the children of God, and they are virtues to be cultivated and honored. They are not the only qualities to be emphasized. There are times when the stern elements of the fearless prophet and the courageous reformer must be called into requisition, and men must speak hot words and do bold deeds and stride right on at the behest of righteousness, let the timid ones think and say what they will; but for the most part if the followers of our Lord would only see to it that their lives are blameless and harmless Christianity would make more progress.

3. Third they were to be "without blemish." This phrase—"without blemish"—is one which has thorough domestication in certain of the books of the Old Testament. It re-appears in the New Testament. But a very exalted and sacred idea always attaches to it. It was the victim offered in sacrifice that was to be "without blemish," or perfect. One of the highest tributes paid to our Lord in the Scriptures, and one of the essential conditions of His fitness to be the great atoning sacrifice for humanity everywhere insisted on, is this—that He was without blemish—in all respects perfect. "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver and gold, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot, even the blood of Christ." He was without blemish, and could save us.

This which qualified Jesus to be the Redeemer of

sinful men is what is sought in the redeemed—that they be "without blemish." "Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love." "That He might present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before Him."

Children of God without blemish is the conception of the Christian character which Paul held up before these Philippian brethren. All the more were they to be "without blemish" because their lives were cast "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." They were in the midst of a community of distorted moral vision and of oblique ways. It is of very great importance always and everywhere to be "without blemish"; but when surrounded by people whose views of truth, whose ideas of life, and whose general course of conduct are always wrong, it is of importance beyond estimate to be right-minded and straightforward and clean.

The caution is not without a present day application. The world has made progress since Paul's time. But his language still has a painful pertinency. The generations have not yet overgrown the habit of being "crooked and perverse." Sin rules with a cruel tyranny in the hearts of the millions, and the out-croppings of wickedness are appalling. With business methods and maxims so largely organized on a basis of selfishness; with tricks and frauds justified in so many quarters by the universality of their practice; with politics so man-

aged,—or rather, in all our large cities at any rate, so mismanaged, as to be a stench in the nostrils of decent citizens; with liquor-saloons and gambling-dens and widely advertised brothels lining our streets, and unblushingly combining to send their representatives to dictate our public policies and make our laws; with able and influential newspapers entering into an unholy conspiracy to break down and destroy our Sacred Rest Day; with high officials and even courts in too many instances apparently willing to lend themselves to schemes to defeat both the clear intent and letter of statutes and thwart justice; with much of our social life so hollow and worldly, there is still a call, loud and clear as though voiced through the trumpet of God, for all believers to live unblemished lives. The crookedness and perversity of the generation demand it, and the progress of the Kingdom is conditioned upon it.

III. *The third point looking to the development and illustration of spiritual life named and pressed by the apostle has to do with a service of light-shedding or illumination which the disciples of our Lord are to render to the world.*

"Among whom ye are seen as lights in the world."

The Old Version has it: "among whom *ye shine* as lights in the world." But the New: "among whom *ye are seen*," or, "among whom *ye appear*," rather than the Old: "among whom *ye shine*," seems to express the exact thought of the original. The image which shaped itself to the apostle's mind as he wrote was that of a new star coming out and taking its place in the constellations of the skies. Under this imagery he conceived of each Christian, with his pure character and lofty example, as a new luminary in the heavens of mankind. As

God's children, true and faithful, they would become visible to the eyes of all onlookers, and light would emanate from them.

Doubt has sometimes been expressed as to whether Paul intended to say: "among whom *ye are seen*" or "among whom *be ye seen*,"—whether in other words he was stating to them a fact—"*ye are seen*," or was laying on them an injunction: "*be ye seen*." But the whole spirit and structure of the passage makes it clear that the apostle was not exhorting but pressing home a reality. He was saying that Christians are, as they must be if they are Christians at all, luminaries in the world. They can be larger luminaries than they are; they can shine with a steadier flame and throw their beams farther out into the darkness; but this is what they are—they are luminaries. They are light-givers. They are stars in the firmament of our humanity.

This is an invaluable service to render,—just to stand and in virtue of what one is in his thought and life and moral attitude, to send beams of light all abroad. The needs of humanity are manifold and pressing. Men need a profounder sense of the presence and goodness of God. They need more purity. They need more love. They need more consecration to ends worthy of their own souls and of the high destiny which is within their reach. But light is a primal and universal necessity. There is something in sin besides ignorance and folly. Multitudes go wrong who know better. All the same not so many would transgress if they understood fully how unwise it is as well as wicked to break divine laws and resist the divine Spirit. Any man who has any true light in him is bound to let it out, that it may go forth, to scatter darkness and carry health and healing.

Jesus said to the disciples in His sermon on the Mount: "Ye are the light of the world." So the apostle says here: "among whom ye are seen as lights in the world." In both instances, of course, the idea is of a derived or reflected light. In the highest sense the words belong only to Christ. "I am the light of the world." Christians are the lesser lights of the spiritual galaxy,—always dim in comparison with the shining of the Sun of Righteousness; but they are still lights. Though they give out, and can give out, only a borrowed radiance; they are yet the clearest luminaries which not a few ever behold. More people than we any of us suspect have no other conception of Christianity than that which they get from what they actually see in the lives and doings of Christ's disciples. They do not go to the original and independent sources of light; they do not go to Jesus Christ, and sit at His feet, and look at truth as He speaks it out and lives it out; they do not yield up their minds and hearts to the influence of the Spirit, and come under His guidance, and let Him take them forward into the knowledge and fellowship of the Law of God; they do not open the Bible and search the Scriptures with an eager determination to know just what eternal life is, and how to come into the possession and power of it; but they watch Christians, and draw all their inferences and reach all their conclusions about Christianity from the type of character which Christians illustrate. Christians are the Bible the world reads. Christians are the Christ the world studies. If Christians illustrate a new creation, if they exemplify a new life, if they bring forth the fruits of a new spirit, they are not only luminaries, but luminaries in

whose light the benighted multitudes will sometime come to rejoice.

IV. *A fourth point looking to the development and illustration of spiritual life named and pressed by the apostle has to do with the positive and aggressive work of making known the saving truth of the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it, or who, if they are not ignorant of it, have yet failed to receive and appropriate it to their own deep needs.*

"Holding forth the word of life."

This means telling the story of salvation through an incarnate and crucified and risen Lord. It means telling it out in words, and telling it out in the life. These disciples did not have the New Testament, as we now have it, with its marvelous record of Jesus,—how He came to us to express the love of God, and what He said, and what He did, and in what manner He bore our sins in His own body, and died on Calvary, the Righteous for the unrighteous, that He might open the way and restore us to the fellowship of the Father. But they had Christ in their hearts. They knew in their own experience how He delivers from the guilt and bondage of sin. They knew what a Rest-Giver He is to troubled souls. This blessed fact they were to make known. To men and women far away in folly and transgression, or low down in vice, or alienated through pride, or perplexed and bewildered with the problems of life, they were to carry the good news, and keep on carrying them, till as many as possible had been persuaded to believe on the Christ.

This is a high and sacred function. To hold forth the word of life is one of the chief duties, as it is one of the precious privileges, of the Christian Church.

The two words, which, for substance were always on the lips of the Great Teacher are these—"Come" and "Go."

First it was to be "come." It was to be "come" James, and "come" John, and "come" Andrew, and "come" Peter, and the rest. It was "come" everybody. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden." "Whosoever will let him come." Men were to come to Him in order to be at the right point from which to start out. They must come to Him with their sins. They must come to Him with their narrow and false views of life and duty. They must come to Him with their old natures, and through faith in Him, and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, secure new natures—be made new creations. This was and is the necessity laid on every man who would be right with God, and in a condition to render efficient service, for the great cause of truth and virtue, to come to Jesus Christ, and through Him to get right moral and spiritual adjustment to law and obligation and destiny.

But the "coming" was to be immediately followed by a "going." The "coming" was to be in order to "going." "Go" ye. "Go" ye and work. "Go" ye and witness. "Go" ye into all the world. "Go" ye and preach the Gospel to every creature. So, they went out everywhere—these early disciples—publishing the truth as it is in Jesus. Philip heard the Master say—"Go," and he went. Paul heard the Master say—"Go," and he went. This word which he had heard from the lips of the Lord, and which had led him out on his great missionary tours, he passed on to others. It was his desire that these Philippian disciples should distinguish themselves by holding forth the word of life.

But there is still another reason, doubtless, why the apostle urged the duty of holding forth the word of life on his fellow-believers at Philippi. There is a reacting value in all services rendered in the name of the Lord, and especially in all services which have for their chief object the winning of souls to the faith. To help others is to help ourselves. To try to diffuse light is to gather light. To give is to receive. In sincerity and love to speak the Name which is above every name is to increase its attractiveness to our own hearts. Aiding others to grow, we grow in our own thought and character.

Phillips Brooks says: "It is the sincere and deep conviction of my soul, that, if the Christian faith does not culminate and complete itself in the effort to make Christ known to all the world, that faith appears to me to be a thoroughly unreal and insignificant thing, destitute of power for the single life, and incapable of being convincingly proved to be true." He says again: "Always the enlargement of the faith brings the endearment of the faith; and to give the Savior to others makes Him more thoroughly our own."

This was all clear to the apostle. Paul knew that if he could only get these disciples to work, and keep them at work, at the blessed task of acquainting ignorant and sinful men with the saving grace of Jesus Christ, their own growth and joy would be assured. There is no solution for the difficulties one may have in believing: there is no safeguard against temptation, either inward or outward; there is no way of rising superior to the crookednesses and perversities of an evil generation, like downright earnest effort to bring souls to Christ.

This passage is concluded with a statement of the joy

it would be to the apostle to have the suggestions and recommendations here made carried out and illustrated in the life.

"That I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain. Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all; and in the same manner do ye also joy, and rejoice with me."

As twice before, so here once more, Paul brings in the thought and motive of "the day of Christ." To that day he was always looking forward, and how it should fare with him on that day was a consideration he never dismissed from his mind. The better Christians these Philippian brethren became, and the more efficient, the more evident would it be at "the day of Christ" that his labors in their behalf had not been in vain, and the more reason would he have for glorying in what had been accomplished.

But the apostle was not thinking merely of his own interest and happiness. For the significant fact which these closing words bring to the surface is the intimate, or rather one might better say the vital way, in which Paul identified his life with the lives of these disciples whom he held in his heart and to whom he wrote in such glowing terms of affection. He was in their work and life, and they were in his work and life, as both—the teacher and the taught, the leader and the followers—were in Christ. He might be offered upon the sacrifice and service of their faith in a near-approaching martyrdom; but if so he would rejoice with them on their behalf,—as he was sure they too would rojoice with him on his behalf. They were one in the Lord.

The imagery, of course, in which this thought is ex-

pressed, is derived from the ancient custom of sacrifices. The reference may be to pagan libations; but it is more likely the apostle had in mind the Jewish drink-offerings. "The Levitical law required that the offering of a certain quantity of wine should in most cases accompany the sacrifice of fire." Paul was ready to enrich and complete the sacrifice of their faith and the fruits of their faith which these Philippians had laid or were laying on the altar of Christ, by pouring out his own life-blood. Not Paul, but the Philippians themselves were the priests, and their trust in Christ and their services for Christ, were the sacrifice; but it was the blood of the apostle, fresh from his warm throbbing heart, that was to be the precious libation. It was one service, one aim, one joy, one hope; the apostle was bound up in these brethren; and these brethren were bound up in the apostle, and all of them together were in Christ.

Few things in our earth are more beautiful than the identification of minister and people. When the people shall be ready to do their best to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things," and the ministers shall be ready to spend and be spent, even to the sacrifice of the last drop of blood in their veins, in the common service of our divine Lord, there will be not only an exhibition of harmony to gladden all eyes, but a forward impulse, impossible to be successfully resisted by the evil influence of the world, will be sure to be given to the Kingdom; and faith will take hold on the hearts of men, and truth will spread, and righteousness will win victories prophetic of the speedy coming of the final triumph.

Fellowship and Sympathy.

"But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child *serveth* a father, *so* he served with me in furtherance of the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me: but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly. But I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need; since he longed after you all, and was sore troubled, because ye had heard that he was sick: for indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. I have sent him therefore the more diligently, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy; and hold such in honor: because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me."

—Phil. 2: 19–30.

IX.

FELLOWSHIP AND SYMPATHY.

In this passage we have a beautiful picture, drawn by a master hand, of the tender fraternal relations subsisting between true Christian hearts, and of the sense of obligation instinctively felt by disciples of our Lord to be interested in each other's welfare. So far as it can be done in words, the apostle here sets before us an object-lesson, attractive and impressive, of the comfort and power and value in general of the fellowship in which believers in Christ mutually walk and do their work, and of the sympathy they mutually share when overtaken by misfortunes and distresses.

It will be in order, therefore, to make this our theme, and to dwell somewhat carefully during the moments at our disposal on *Fellowship and Sympathy* as illustrated by the various persons whose attitudes and actions are made known to us in the paragraph of the epistle which is now in hand for consideration.

There are four parties directly concerned in this fellowship and sympathy. They are Paul and Timothy on the one hand, and on the other the Philippian church and Epaphroditus.

It is to be kept continually in mind that Paul was a prisoner at Rome. He had been in this great dominating city of the world well on to what Luke in the Book of Acts calls " two whole years," when the letter to the Philippians was written. He was permitted to preach

and he did preach with special effectiveness; but his preaching was in bonds. He was hand-cuffed to the soldiers who had him in charge, and was never allowed to be alone day or night. His treatment was not severe, in some respects, indeed, it was remarkably kind; but he was in chains; and his liberty was curtailed to the extent that he must remain in chains and under military guard till his trial came off.

Timothy was a spiritual child of the apostle, and the affection cherished by Paul for the young and beloved disciple, as has been said in a previous discourse, was that of a father for a son. The affection was reciprocated; and the tender youth regarded the man who had brought to him a knowledge of Jesus Christ as a true and loving offspring regards a worthy parent. Delicately reared, with a constitution never robust, with a sensitiveness which made him shrink from responsibility and opposition, naturally inclined to an ascetic rigor which he did not have the strength to bear, and possessing a temperament which exposed him to some risks on the social side of life, his Christian character had in it, both in the earlier and later years, a large infusion of what we should call the feminine element.

Timothy was a man of rare sweetness of disposition, of sincere and earnest faith in the Son of God, and his loyalty to his friends was of the kind that never swerves. As soon as his personal merits and fitness for the service became generally known to the brethren, he was solemnly ordained to the work of an evangelist. He became the associate of the apostle and the messenger of the churches.

It is not probable that Timothy was with the apostle on his journey to Rome. But he must have joined him

very soon after his arrival and remained with him during the entire period of his two year's imprisonment. As has been said by another: "All the indications of this period point to incessant missionary activity." He was especially busy with the care of the Macedonian churches.

In the words before us Paul speaks of Timothy in terms of warmest commendation. "But I hope in the Lord Jesus Christ to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state. For I have no man like-minded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel."

The declaration here made of having "no man like-minded" to care for them, is a somewhat surprising one, —especially when there is coupled with it the further statement that "all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ." It is not to be supposed the apostle meant this to be taken in the full literal sense. Under some strong provocation, or in a momentary mood of dejection, he put the case emphatically. Possibly, as has been suggested, some of his most trustworthy disciples had been sent away on various missions, one in one direction, and another in another.

This is Professor Ramsey's explanation of the language: "It seems impossible," he says, "to believe that Paul could have written like this, if he had had with him Tychicus, 'faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord,' Aristarchus, Mark, and above all Luke. Yet, if anything is sure about that period, it is that Aristarchus and Luke had been with Paul from his arrival at

Rome till after Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians were written, while Tychicus probably joined him with Timothy in 60. On our supposition, Mark and Tychicus had already been sent on missions to Asia; Luke is either the 'true yoke-fellow' addressed in Philippians 4: 3, or was actually the bearer of the letter to Philippi; Aristarchus also had been sent on a mission during the summer of 61; and Epaphras naturally had returned to the Lycas valley. There remained some friends with Paul, probably Demas among them; but he did not feel sure of their thorough trustworthiness, and his doubt about Demas was afterwards justified."

Possibly, too, there had been a temporary falling away from him, as in the instance to which he refers when he says that at his first defense no one took his part, but all forsook him and fled.

At the same time there is always too much ground for charges of this sort. For it is true, pitifully true, that the proportion of Christians, who are willing to forego their own ends,—their own comfort and advantage—for the sake of the things of Jesus Christ always has been and still is, quite too small.

But there was no spirit of self-seeking in Timothy, and no shrinking from hardships and trials and sacrifices. He was wholly devoted to Christ, in every exigency thoroughly loyal to Christ, and like the apostle was ready, or rather was glad, to spend and be spent in the service of Christ.

As to the Philippian church it is worth remembering that up to the time of the imprisonment at Rome the apostle had received no material aid from its members for the last ten years. It was not because his love for them, or their love for him had cooled; but there had

been no opportunity for testimonies of this sort. Previously this church had assisted him, as it had gone to the extent of its power, and, as he tells us, even beyond its power, to aid, in response to his appeals, their poorer brethren in Judea. Indeed it was from this Philippian church alone that Paul would consent to take aid for the relief of his personal wants. But, as has just been said, there had been nothing of this giving to the apostle for his own individual use for a decade. When, however, the time came for fresh demonstrations of this sort, and there was need on Paul's part of practical sympathy, then these brethren were forward to show their attachment for him. In his extremity of sore destitution—a fact to which it seems necessary to adhere in spite of recent arguments to the contrary—their love for him revived and flamed out into the old enthusiasm, and they hastened to assure him that in his sufferings they also suffered.

It was as the organ of their love, and the bearer of their gracious bounty, that Epaphroditus found his way from the church at Philippi into the presence of Paul in his bonds at Rome. He was the voice through which heart spoke to heart.

Epaphroditus was a remarkable man. He presents to us a character which is worthy both of careful study and hearty emulation. Recall the apostle's tribute to his devotion. He has been speaking of his hope to send Timothy to the brethren at Philippi, and of his own expectation of coming to them soon. "But" he adds, "but I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker, and your messenger and minister to my need; since he longed after you all, and was sore troubled because ye heard that he was

sick; for indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. I have sent him, therefore, the more diligently, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him, therefore, in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor; because for the work of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his life to supply that which was lacking in your supply toward me."

Or to state the last clause a little differently, so that there shall be no hint or tone of reproach in the language, as it is certain none was intended by the apostle, "hazarding," or putting at stake, "his life to do for me and for the cause of Christ that which you, in your absence and distance, found it impossible to do."

Paul here calls Epaphroditus an "apostle and minister." All that is meant, however, by the words in this instance is that he was the delegate or messenger of the Philippian church to the apostle. He was the one whom the Philippian church had "sent" to the apostle, and he was charged to minister to the apostle's need.

But this earnest and faithful messenger went far beyond anything implied in his instructions. There are three choice and magnificent titles which the apostle confers upon Epaphroditus. "My brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier." He is a "brother" sincere and true, in the common faith of Christianity. He is a "fellow-worker" and joins in heartily with the apostle in his efforts to win men to Christ and to build them up in lives of love and righteousness. He is a "fellow-soldier," and is ready to share whatever hardships and dangers there may be in the holy warfare in

which all earnest followers of the Captain of our salvation are engaged. He came to express sympathy; but he remained to exemplify brotherhood, and to be a co-laborer in Christian toils, and to be a brave and zealous fighter for the truth.

This, however, is not the full statement of the facts. Epaphroditus pushed his activity to the extreme point of peril to his life. "For the work of Christ he came nigh unto death." This "work of Christ" was not only what he had done in undergoing the hardships and enduring the fatigue of a journey from Philippi to Rome in order to bring the apostle expressions of sympathy and needed supplies; but also what he had done as the "brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier" of Paul after he had reached the city. He made himself ill by his zealous efforts for Christ. He put his life in jeopardy. He treated his life with the reckless prodigality with which a gambler treats gold. He ran the chance of losing it for the sake of bearing some effective testimony and doing some effective work for Christ.

This was carrying interest and activity too far. Having come to Rome on a mission of relief he was in danger of increasing the sorrows of the apostle, and cutting short his own career of usefulness. But it is refreshing to come across the story of a man who is ready to carry the same glowing and even perilous enthusiasm into the service of Jesus Christ and of souls, which multitudes on multitudes carry into the pursuits of pleasure and social life or politics or commerce and trade. Here is a man who threw, not his bodily comfort merely, nor his time merely, nor his possessions merely, nor his chances for promotion merely, into the risk he was venturing, but his life as well. Like the apostle himself, he did not

hold his life dear unto himself, if only he might complete his course, and fulfil the ministry he received from Christ.

With this statement of the situation, and these references to the apostle and those who were grouped about him and engaged in the fellowship and sympathy of Christ, the way is open for some practical inferences and suggestions of a more general nature concerning the intimacy of relation in which disciples of our Lord stand to each other and which they ought to exemplify in their mutual intercourse.

1. *Christ becomes to His true followers one of the strongest and most sacred bonds of fellowship and sympathy of which men have knowledge.*

Timothy was with Paul, and Epaphroditus was with Paul, and the thoughts and tender interests of the church away there at Philippi were with Paul, and the solicitudes of genuine believers wherever hearts had been won to Christ, and organization established, were with Paul, because they all had a common center of faith and hope and love in the Son of God. In drawing them into fellowship and sympathy with Himself Jesus drew them into fellowship and sympathy with each other. In Jesus they had a common attraction and a common interpreter and a common obligation. They were one in Him. In the transcendent matter of the soul they thought alike and felt alike.

Men have bonds of fellowship and sympathy in the common race to which they belong, and in the common language they speak, and in their common nationality, and in the common traditions they inherit, and in their common trades and callings, and in their common party convictions and associations, and in the memory

of studies and toils and trials endured together; but these bonds have little strength in comparison with the bond of Jesus Christ.

In how many instances race prejudices are broken down, and the boundaries of nationality are over-leaped, and the obstacles of an unfamiliar tongue are surmounted, in the interest of a common fellowship and sympathy in Christ. In the Indian massacre in Minnesota in the early sixties when Mankato and St. Peter and other towns up and down the Minnesota river were swept clean by the awful assault, the lives of the Riggses and the Williamsons and the Ponds, and those who were associated with them in missionary service to these wild tribes, were saved because the Christian Indians thought more of these who had led them to Christ than they did of their own chiefs, and more of the bond which had been created by faith and love than they did of those which grew out of their tribal relations and habits and interests.

The bonds by which men are held together in Christ, are strong because they are bonds in truth, and bonds in righteousness, and bonds in aspirations and aims which take souls forward into the light and life and glory of God. When men are held to each other by the ties of selfishness, or some fierce hate which is cherished in common, or by vices and crimes in which they have a common stake, they are liable to fly asunder at any moment, and sooner or later they will fly asunder. Selfishness and hate and vice and crime are not naturally cohesive forces. Cliques, syndicates, parties, who have no other uniting influence than their common interest in public plunder, are destined to sudden and surprising explosions. Faith and love and purity are cementing

energies. Faces set alike toward heaven, and hearts set alike in the things of Christ, always insure an increasing fellowship and sympathy. If Christian men ever fall asunder, as they do, and become alienated from each other, it is not because there is any natural tendency in Christianity to work separation of heart from heart and life from life, but for the reason, that, in these instances, selfishness or prejudice or passion or inability to see clearly has been too much for the measure of Christian character that has been attained. It is not because they are Christian; it is because they are so imperfect in their Christian character—so feebly developed, and so far from what they ought to be, that the disciples of Jesus are ever led to entertain ill feelings toward each other, and mutually to say hard and bitter things. Christ is love, and love is a bond of union. Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus, and the faithful hearts which are behind them have their oneness of fellowship and sympathy in Christ.

2. *The time above all others in which to manifest fellowship and sympathy is when men are in extremities of need.*

Timothy was with Paul when his presence was of untold value to the apostle. A prisoner, in chains, in a strange city, charged with an offense for which he might be condemned and executed at any moment, and yet burdened with a care for all the churches, and intent on winning just as many into the faith of Christ as he might, who can estimate the worth to him in comfort and encouragement of this alert and faithful spiritual son of his?

The Philippian church, through the presence of their messenger, the devout and earnest Epaphroditus, who

bore the gift of the apostle, and assurance of love, was with Paul just when the evidences of regard would count for most. In an exigency when he was unable to help himself, these brethren came to his help. In circumstances in which there would be few expressions of interest in his comfort and welfare, these brethren conveyed to him in the most delicate way possible, tokens of their unabated affection.

It was the timeliness of the fellowship and sympathy which gave to their acts their superlative value. Paul was a man capable of intense and prolonged friendship. With a peculiar fondness he cherished all kindred spirits. More than one name has been made immortal in virtue of the apostle's appreciation of the obligations and blessings of friendship. Still he was quite able to go his own way and bear his own burdens. Free to move here and there, and to do his full work, he would have gone his own way bravely. But under restraint, in bonds, expressions of regard were unutterably precious, because so needed.

It is always so. The time to feed a man in the expectation that he will appreciate the kindness, is to feed him when he is hungry. The time to quench the thirst of a thirsty man is when he is thirsty. The time to clothe a man is when he is naked, and cannot clothe himself. The time to shelter a man is when he has no roof over his head. The time to show sympathy for a man is not when all his affairs are flourishing and the financial skies are bright, but when his troubles are pouring down upon him in terrific storms. The time to weep with men is not when they are smiling, and their hearts are full of song, and their faces are radiant with joy, but when they are in tears, and their hopes have set

in the blackness of night. The time to throw arms of strength about the weak and tempted is when they are assailed by the power of passion and appetite, and it looks as though they must go under.

How many households there are always sure to be in a great city like our own,—how many widows with little children depending on them for support,—how many sons and daughters with invalid parents to be taken care of,—how many husbands, worn and weary and discouraged in their vain efforts to find work, who have families to feed and clothe and house,—to whom messengers bearing timely aid are as the angels of God. It is the timeliness of this assistance which stamps it with worth so extraordinary. In the summer, it may be, they do not need assistance. In health and under favorable circumstances, they do not need assistance. But in the sore straitness of some especially trying winter, it is assistance or the poor-house. Or possibly it is assistance or sickness and desolation and death.

It is the same in the department of Christian activity and life. The time to lend a hand to workers for Christ,—to ministers, to missionaries, to Sunday-school teachers, and to all the various orders of our Lord's servants, is when they are wearied with their toils, and the wheels drag and their hearts are heavy with discouragement, and it seems to them the contest is unequal, and they must give it up. There are experiences into which men are forced in their efforts to advance the Kingdom of God when just the clasp of a friendly palm, or an expression of confidence and love, or a lift from a fresh shoulder at the burden which oppresses and staggers, would have in it all the inspiration and force of a providential intervention.

When Paul is in chains it is a time for Timothy and Epaphroditus to be at his side, and for all true Christians to be giving assurance of fellowship and sympathy

"The heart—the heart. Oh; let it spare
A sigh for other's pain;
The breath that soothes a brother's care
Is never spent in vain.
And though it throbs at gentlest touch,
Or sorrows faintest call,
'Twere better it should ache too much,
Then never ache at all.
No ray of glory lights the breast
That beats for self alone."

Some Wholesome Warnings.

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision."—*Phil. 3: 1–2.*

X.

SOME WHOLESOME WARNINGS.

These words will lead us to speak of what may be called *Some Wholesome Warnings.*

There is a difference of opinion amongst exegetical scholars touching the precise thought which was in the mind of the apostle when he wrote this word—"finally."

Some suppose he had already said what it was his original intention to say, and that he was bringing his letter to a close; but that some fresh news was brought to him, or some sudden impulse seized upon him, so that he resumed and still went on. Accepting this view, the latter part of the sentence would read, not as it is here translated: "rejoice in the Lord"; but rather, while not losing out of itself the element of joy, but taking this element along with it: "farewell in the Lord." This is Lightfoot's interpretation; and his paraphrase of the passage is: "And now, my brethren, I must wish you farewell. Rejoice in the Lord."

Others take the ground that "finally" marks an approach to the end of the epistle, but not necessarily a very near approach. Notable instances of a similar use of the word are found in First Thessalonians 4:1, where "finally" comes in not far from the middle of the letter; and in Second Thessalonians, 3:1, where "finally" is employed while a third of what is to be communicated is still unwritten. Hence it is not to be inferred that Paul meant, when introducing this word "finally," to end his

letter at once, but for some reason, not apparent, was led to change his plan, but rather to make it the turning point to other matters. This is Vaughan's conclusion; and his rendering of the passage runs: "My letter draws to its close. Its keynote has been the duty of joy, and it shall be so to the end."

The subject of Christian Joy, which is here brought to our attention, has already been before us, and will be again in the course of this study. It may be dismissed from present consideration, therefore, with the single remark that joy,—joy in Christ, is something never long absent from the apostle's thinking and living and exhorting. It is the ground-tone of all the music he makes. No hardships, no sorrows, no persecutions, are ever severe enough to destroy or over-master his joy in Christ. Paul's joy in Christ was of the substance of his life in Christ.

The words which follow the opening sentence of the paragraph now under review afford a fresh illustration of the apostle's willingness to spend and be spent in the service of the Master and for the good of souls. "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not irksome, but for you it is safe."

It is a question just what Paul means in the words: "To write the same things," or to cast it into an equivalent phrase: "To repeat again and again the same things." Possibly he may be referring to counsel he has given these Philippian brethren in his various visits to them, or in some letter previously written and sent, but now lost. But the significance of the expression seems to lie nearer the surface; and most likely we get at the heart of the matter by construing what he says in this way: "I am uttering words which are familiar to

you; I am giving you advice which you have often had occasion to receive from me; joy is a theme which has been often dwelt upon in my interviews with you and in my communications to you, and I am still laying stress upon it; dangers which have threatened in the past continue to threaten, and I lift up once more the voice of earnest caution; but this iteration is not wearisome to me; it is not a service from which I shrink and hold back; it is enough for me to know it is good for you and conducive to your spiritual welfare."

Repetition is a great aid to progress. Facts need to be affirmed over and over again, if they are to be made to lodge in the mind. Truth must be presented times without number, it may be, in order to be thoroughly apprehended. The parent, the teacher, the minister, who has the patience and love to repeat the things fundamental and essential, though in varied forms, will win. It is a glorious advantage that Gospel truth, while so simple, admits of such varied presentations.

We now come to the warnings which it is the special business in hand to consider. Of these there are three. It will be as well perhaps to take them in the order in which the apostle has given them to us.

1. *The first warning is to beware of the dogs.*

This is a style of characterization so foreign to what we are accustomed, particulary when speaking or writing on grave subjects, that the injunction is quite likely, either to startle us by what seems its coarseness, or to excite to laughter by its apparent incongruity with the dignity of the interest involved.

But it is to be remembered that among the ancients, "dogs," like other animals, stood as the representatives or symbols of certain moral qualities in men. They

were not high qualities, however, but low and repulsive qualities. It was an honor to be called lion-like, but it was a bitter reproach to be called dog-like.

In the view of the old Greeks, "dogs" typified ferocity, greediness, impudence. In the view of the Jews "dogs" typified degradation and uncleanness. This is the Biblical idea of "dogs,"—they are profane and impure and shameless creatures. When Hazael intimated to Elisha that only a "dog" could be guilty of the brutal treachery the prophet had foreshadowed, it was fancied nothing more would be needed to allay apprehension. In the Book of Revelation the term is applied to those who are wanting in spiritual fitness to enter the New Jerusalem. "Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the idolaters, and everyone that loveth and maketh a lie." It is a bad fellowship, and a sad fate to realize. At the time our Lord was here on the earth "dogs" was an epithet the Jews had come to apply indiscriminately to all Gentiles. It was an immensely significant and humiliating designation. To make use in part of the language of another: "The herds of dogs which prowl about eastern cities, without a home or an owner, feeding on the refuse of the streets, quarrelling among themselves, and attacking the passer-by," give a wonderful vividness to the imagery.

But who are these "dogs" against whom the apostle so urgently warns the Philippians? They are the false Judaizing teachers who would feed the people on the mouldy bread of a supplanted system of ceremonies and rituals instead of the fresh bread of the living truth as it is in Jesus Christ. The term of reproach which the Jews applied to the Gentiles even after they became

Christians—the apostle here turned back upon themselves. He did it on the ground that having refused to accept the Son of God they had become aliens from the true Israel,

2. *The second warning is to beware of evil workers.* "Evil workers" is not quite so strong an expression, and does not mean quite the same, as "evil doers." For the thought in mind is not of men who go forth with a wholly malevolent intent and fully determined to do all the harm they can; but rather of men who bring disaster because they are incompetent, or have mistaken notions, or are fanatical and bigoted in spirit, and so insist on the acceptance of their own ideas at whatever cost to the cause. These "evil workers" were inside the Church, and not outside of it. The ruin they were in danger of effecting was not the ruin which is accomplished when pronounced enemies make open deadly assaults; but the ruin which follows betrayal or misdirected energies on the part of pretended friends. It is the ruin wrought by men who are not over scrupulous in their methods, and who substitute their own conceits for the truth.

All the same they are "evil workers." These men in particular were evil workers. They were evil workers because they maintained that something in addition to a sincere and earnest faith in Jesus Christ is necessary to salvation, and that the works which ought to follow and attest the genuineness of the salvatiou should precede or accompany salvation as the condition. They could never quite come to the point of trusting all for time and eternity to Him who bore our sins in His own body and died for us on the cross. They could never fully consent to see the old actually swallowed up in the

new,—and the new meeting the needs of sinful human souls on terms so simple and easy. They had a zeal, but it was wrongly directed; and just so far as they succeeded in their aims they were unprofitable, not only, but mischievous servants.

Who again, are the "evil workers"? They are precisely the same persons Paul had in mind when he was warning the Philippians to beware of "the dogs." The characterizations are different; but the application is to the same individuals. "The dogs" against whom they are to be on their guard are the "evil workers" against whom they are to be on their guard. They are the false Judaizing teachers who cannot let the people rest on a simple faith in Jesus Christ, but keep disturbing them with their suggestions of the necessity of rites and ceremonies, such as used to belong to the old systems. Had these Judaizing teachers contended for an observance—never so strict—of the moral law, they would not have been "evil workers," but workers of good; but it was not the moral law, but the law of forms on which they placed the emphasis. In this way they disparaged the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness to salvation.

3. *The third warning is to beware of the concision.* This warning takes us forward at once to what was the exact difficulty and peril. The danger was that worn out traditions would be brought in and imposed on the disciples of Christ to their serious confusion and embarrassment. With "the concision" it was not the Gospel simply and in its simplicity; but it was the Gospel with the law added. It was not Christ simply and in His simplicity; but it was Christ helped out by Moses. It was not baptism alone; but it was baptism

supplemented by circumcision. These men of "the concision" were not opposed to the Gospel and to trusting in Christ, and to the rite of baptism; but they were under bondage to the past to such an extent that they were not quite sure these were enough to secure the salvation of the soul. In a certain way they had come out from Judaism; but they had brought many of the forms and much of the spirit of Judaism along with them; and they were doing their best to engraft these forms upon Christianity and to inject this spirit into Christianity. These men laid stress on circumcision; but in Paul's conception circumcision after the old fashion, for those who had come to know the circumcision of the heart through faith in Jesus Christ, was a mere mutilation of the flesh and a wicked caricature of the rite as it had once been enjoined and practised.

As has already been inferred the men of "the concision" were the same men—the Judaizing teachers—whom the apostle had just called "the dogs," and "the evil workers." Under all these aspects they were disturbers of the peace and prosperity of the Church. These Philippian disciples were happy in their faith; but they were in danger of being turned aside from the pure truth, and torn into factions. The faithful and loving apostle who had led them to the Lord, and who had prayed for them so earnestly and watched over them with such tender solicitude, felt constrained to put them on their guard by uttering this startling word —"beware," and then following it up with designations which, as they rolled off, one after another, must have had somewhat of the effect of a succession of sharp electric shocks, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision." Even the dullest

amongst them, must have had his attention aroused by one or another of these characterizations. If there were men amongst them whom Paul did not hesitate to call "dogs" and "evil workers" and "the concision," and who were trying to influence them, they might well take the alarm and put themselves on their guard. It is presumed they did.

But have these warnings which were addressed by Paul to the Philippian brethren any application in these modern times? Have they any pertinency to us in our circumstances? Most emphatically—yes. Indeed unless my eyes are utterly blinded to the facts of the situation, we need substantially the same counsel, and for substantially the same reasons.

1. *We need to beware of fads and hobbies, in our churches, and of tendencies to divert the churches from the great and sacred objects for which they were established by our Lord and have been kept alive and efficient from age to age by the Holy Spirit.*

Nothing is more common than for men who have whims and conceits, no matter how absurd, to try to make the Church of Jesus Christ the exponent of these whims and conceits. Be the theory as wild as it may, and as widely out of gear with common sense, it must be adopted by the Churches of Jesus Christ, so we are told, or they are no longer true churches, and are failing utterly in their mission. All of us can call to mind instances in which churches have been wounded at heart, and greatly crippled, by men and women gone crazy over faith-cure notions. In one of our own suburbs there is an organization made up of men and women who have withdrawn from the several churches

with which they were once identified because these churches would not follow them in their extravagant notions, and make what is at most an incident of the faith the main article of Christianity. All of us can call to mind—and in many instances we do it with sharp pain—the names of individuals who have done what they could do to commit the Church to which they belonged to what calls itself by the sacred designation of Christian Science, but what is in fact only a mischievous caricature and profanation of both these words. For, as has been said so many times, this Christian Science, which has thrown its temporary spell over so many minds, and is just now having its day, is in no sense Christian, and it is in no sense science. For the faith-cure contention there is some ground; but for Christian Science as it is set forth in its books and tracts and on its platforms, there is basis neither in philosophy, nor in revelation, nor in the laws of nature, nor in the sober second thought of any ordinary intelligence. Within certain limits it has always been recognized that mind has influence over matter; but a religion that sets out with the assumption that there is no matter and no sickness and no sin—except as we fancy them—is only nonsense, and it requires no gift of prophecy to foretell its end. It will have its day and cease to be.

For everything good and true the Church of Jesus Christ must have a voice of approval. For everything mean and false it must have a voice of condemnation. It cannot permit itself to look on, as an idle spectator, while injustice is being enacted, and all sorts of wrong are perpetrated. It must stand for justice between man and man, especially if one man be a capitalist and an-

other man a laborer. It must stand for temperance. It must stand for personal and social purity. It must stand for good and equitable and wholesome laws. It must stand for sweet homes. It must stand for order and righteousness in the State. It must stand for the elevation of humanity. But the Church of Jesus Christ is not a bicycle for every crank to mount and ride where he will.

The Church of Jesus Christ may become remiss in its duty. It may fail to speak when it ought to speak in thunder tones. It may get tangled up and compromised in the customs and methods of the world. It may become conventional and fashionable, and empty of all moral force. It may fall into the habit of paying tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and leaving undone the weightier matters of the law—judgment and mercy and faith. It may lose out of its life the sense of straitness which was felt by the Divine Founder of the Church till His mission was accomplished. But the remedy for this weakness and barrenness is the Holy Spirit in the fulness of His light and power, and not fads and whims and hobbies and all sorts of side schemes and issues. The Church of Jesus Christ is not, and cannot be made, a mere secular institution.

2. *We are to beware of the introduction into our Churches of views and measures whose inevitable tendency will be to alienate brethren and work discord and division.*

It is an easy thing to sow seed of strife—gathering the harvest is not so pleasant. It is a simple matter to insinuate opinions which look harmless; but when the opinions have spread from a few minds to many minds,

and have become convictions ruling thought and life, the management of them is often a very serious business.

It is often said of men: "O, let them talk; let them say their say. Truth has nothing to fear from error. Give truth a fair field, and truth will be sure to win. Why get excited over every little wrong notion that some enthusiast sees fit to set in motion?"

All this is plausible; and all this, in a free country, is to be tolerated, or it ought to be. Men who have reached what seem to them important conclusions from reflection and study; men who have convictions on the burning questions of the hour, and who think, if they can only be allowed to speak out their thought, they are able to shed light on pressing problems, are entitled to utter their opinions and to be heard. It is by this process that progress is made in the Church and in the State and in Society. Civilization has come to be what it is through the influence of facts developed by one and another, and ideas thrown out to be examined and taken finally at their worth.

But it does not follow from this that all views and all suggestions are to be heartily welcomed, and especially that they are to be permitted the freedom of the churches of Jesus Christ. Paul at any rate did not deem it a matter of no consequence what kind of teaching was given to these beloved fellow-disciples at Philippi. He saw clearly that if these false teachers were not checked at the outset, and their instruction robbed of its power, parties would spring up, and there would be alienation and division, and the old unity would be destroyed.

How beautiful is unity in the Church. How necessary to the prosperity and efficacy of any given church is unity. Just now the minds of many earnest and devout Christians are occupied in discussing a basis for a closer and more all-embracing unity in the churches of our Lord. Organic unity does not seem to me to be of much concern; but the unity which is in Christ, the unity which is brought about by the indwelling of the Spirit in individual hearts, seems to me to be of all consequence. Only in defense of essential principles may men ever imperil unity.

3. *We are to beware of adopting any policies and cherishing any opinions and falling into any methods of preaching and teaching in our Churches which will tend to divert the minds of men from Jesus Christ, and from the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and from the great central aim which dominated the divine will and brought Jesus Christ into the world.*

Here are the two great facts set over against each other. Men lost in sin, and Christ here to save them; men under condemnation, and Christ here to redeem them at the cost of His own blood; men without hope, and Christ here to breathe hope into them; men helpless, and Christ here to help them,—to help them into knowledge, to help them into purity, to help them into peace, to help them to the realization of a glorious destiny hereafter. Anything thrust between Christ and men,—Christ and the men whom He would reach, and whom He ought to be helped to reach, with His saving grace and renewing power, is an impertinence, and may well justify a repetition of the apostle's sharp warning.

It was right here that the Judaizing teachers whom Paul had in mind were committing their chief offense. They were obscuring and belittling the Gospel. They were diverting the thoughts of men from Him who is the sole way to the Father. As Dr. Robert Rainy has well said: "Judaizing made the highest pretensions to religious security and success; it proposed to expound the only worthy and genuine view of men's relation to God. But in reality the Judaizers wholly misrepresented Christianity, for they had missed the main meaning of it. Judaizing turned men's minds away from what was highest to what was lowest,—from love to law, from God's gifts to men's merits, from inward life and power to outward ceremonial performance, from the spiritual and eternal to the material and temporary. It was a huge melancholy mistake; and yet it was pressed upon Christians as the true religion, which availed with God, and could alone bring blessing to men. Hence as our Lord denounced the Pharisees with special energy, —sometimes with withering sarcasm—so, and for the same reason, did Paul attack the Judaizers. The Pharisees applied themselves to turn the religion of Israel into a soul withering business of formalism and pride; and Paul's opponents strive to pervert to like effect even the gracious and life-giving Gospel of Christ. To such he would give place, no, not for an hour."

This is what we are to hold in mind. It is Jesus Christ who is to be kept all the time at the front. It is Jesus Christ in His manifestation of the love of God. It is Jesus Christ in His atoning sacrifice of Himself for sin. It is Jesus Christ in His saving grace. It is Jesus Christ in the exalted example He places before

us. It is Jesus Christ in the demand He makes upon us to walk in His fellowship and to illustrate His spirit. It is Jesus Christ in the fulness of His illuminating and renewing energy. It is Jesus Christ as the Regenerator of souls, and through souls as the Regenerator of homes and lives and literature and customs and all that tells on the welfare of society. It is Jesus Christ the source of the new eternal life, and the hope of glory.

All Things Loss For Christ.

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, *even* that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."—*Phil. 3:3–9.*

XI.

ALL THINGS LOSS FOR CHRIST.

In our consideration of the two verses of the chapter which immediately precede these now before us, we had in hand some severe but wholesome warnings the apostle felt called upon to address to the Philippian disciples against certain persons whose attitude and influence meant mischief. A Judaizing party had arisen which threatened to destroy the peace and unity of this beloved church, by drawing away just as many as possible from the simplicity of the Gospel, and filling their minds with the notion that they must turn back to outgrown and superceded ceremonies in order to be saved. In particular it was insisted that the right of circumcision must still be observed.

In opposition to those who held these views, and whom he characterized as the "concision"—the mere mutilators of the body instead of the reverent and intelligent and acceptable worshippers of God,—Paul claimed that he, and those of like faith and life, who had put off the impurity of the heart by accepting Christ and coming into conformity to His will, were the true circumcision. Starting on this assumption, and drawing on his own experience to make it good, the apostle, in one of the most remarkable passages to be found in his epistles, passes on to show how he let everything go for Christ, and consented to count all his advantages of whatever sort, real and seeming, only as so much loss in

comparison with the full and complete salvation which is secured to men through faith in Christ. The conclusion reached by the apostle, and in which he rested so triumphantly, is to be our present theme: *All Things Loss For Christ.*

Turning to the passage now selected for study we have, in the opening sentence of it, full warrant for what has just been said. "For we are the circumcision." Not these "dogs," not these "evil workers," not the "concision," of whom the Philippian believers are to "beware"; but "we"—"we," who have turned from the old to the new, and trust in the merits of the Divine Redeemer for salvation: "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." This is simply an anticipation, only the statement of it is put in a little different form, of what is said later in the declaration that all things are counted loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. There is no confidence in what one can do, or come to be, in himself; all the confidence is in Christ, and this confidence is so strong as to mount into "glorying" in Him.

But Paul did not stop with the assertion that he and those who were associated with him in the faith of Christ had no confidence in the flesh; he followed up the assertion with the claim that no man ever had better ground for committing all his hopes for a suitable righteousness to outward privileges and conformities and attainments than he had. "Though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh; if any other man thinketh," or seemeth, "to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more." In passing it may be well to say with Vaughan: "Flesh is the antithesis of *spirit* in all senses!

The contrast runs through all St. Paul's epistles, though it is most fully drawn out in those to the Romans and the Galatians. The present passage shows how comprehensive is the term *flesh*, in St. Paul's thought; including not only all external privileges, of birth, nationality, and class-religion, but also all that self-effort and self-attainment which is independent of divine grace."

See, now, how the apostle makes good his claim of "I —yet—more." *First:* "circumcised the eighth day." "His parents were neither heathen nor sons of Ishmael." He was not a proselyte, but a born Jew. *Second*: "Of the stock of Israel." He was regularly descended from the founder of the race. "Are they Israelites? so am I." *Third:* "Of the tribe of Benjamin." This was one of the most distinguished of the tribes. It was the tribe of the first king. It was the tribe which was alone *faithful to Judah* in the great division. *Fourth:* "A Hebrew of Hebrews." Lightfoot says: "Many of those, whose descent was unimpeachable and who inherited the faith of the Mosaic law, yet as living among heathens adopted the language and conformed to the customs of the people around them. Not so were the forefathers of Saul of Tarsus. There had been no Hellenist among them. They were all strict Hebrews from first to last." For Paul, therefore, to say that he was a strict Hebrew, or a Hebrew of Hebrews, was more than for him to say that he was an Israelite. The Hebrew was of the inner circle of the Israelites. These were the inherited privileges of the apostle.

He proceeds to enumerate certain other privileges which depended on his own personal choice and activity. *First:* "as touching the law a Pharisee." This was as much as to say that he attached himself to the

party which was most scrupulous in its ritualistic observances. Possibly he meant to say more than this; but this much it is quite certain he intended to affirm. *Second:* "as touching zeal persecuting the Church." No man of the Jewish faith had been more determined and energetic in his opposition to the new way. *Third:* "as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless." There was nothing more for him to do than he had done to make his righteousness as precribed by the law complete. But he was careful to insert the words—"which is in the law,"—for he had come to have a new view of righteousness,—a view reaching down far deeper and rising far higher than any he had ever known till he found it in Christ. But according to his former standard and method of righteousness he was "blameless."

All this, however, he sets aside at one stroke. "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

This is the sweeping renunciation Paul makes. "All things" were surrendered for the gain he was to find in accepting Jesus Christ. Personal pride and will, the joy and hope of possession, the ties of closest kinship, were all esteemed as nothing, and tossed away as "loss" in comparison with the peace and approval of God in Christ Jesus. He came round to this broad rule: "If

necessary, everything shall go for Christ." Looking down into his own heart and understanding the significance of its wants and aspirations; looking out upon the world and knowing how attractive are its invitations, and how strong its appeals and influences, he could yet say—"All things—let them be loss for Christ."

He made the statement just as broad and inclusive as possible. Not his ill-grounded hopes merely; not the advantages merely which came to him from his conformity to the law, for what was "gain" to him in these respects he "counted loss"; but "*all things*," personal comfort, personal ends, personal prospects, personal ambitions, the affection of friends, the joys of social life, the triumphs of competition, his own self-development, will, earthly hopes, each and all were to be held second and subordinate by him to obedience to Jesus.

Observe how he carried all this out. To do this take the single fact of the way in which he treated his own comfort and ease in presence of opportunities to be of service to the Divine Master. This is selected because after all it is one of the closest and severest tests with which to try men. There are ten men who can be induced to give up wealth, stingy as large numbers of men are; or schemes of promotion, or certain social enjoyments and indulgences, for Christ's sake, to one who can be persuaded to forego ease and comfort; that is, to the extent of pain to body and mind, or both, for the end of pleasing Christ.

Men shrink from suffering. They draw back from weariness. They hesitate at any self-denial which involves physical discomfort. To undergo actual hardships and personal deprivations; to submit to ridicule

and reproach and misrepresentation, seem always to be hard prices to pay in order to get men to be more loving to one another, and more elevated in their sentiments, and more just in their lives.

Especially do men become impatient at performing unappreciated tasks, at bearing unappreciated burdens, for the good of others. There is no command of our Savior which we take up quite so readily and eagerly as indignantly shaking the dust from off our feet in the presence of those who are not willing to receive us, or hear us, or do as we want them to do. Efforts for our fellows which seem to be fruitless or which recoil upon us in inconvenience and sorrow, we are always in haste to characterize as casting pearls before swine. With an insight which never fails, Christ makes the reluctance of the friend who is asked for three loaves at midnight in granting the request to turn on the point of personal comfort. "Trouble me not." He did not care about the three loaves; but he shrank from being disturbed. It was not till he was worried by "importunity" that he would consent to grant the request.

Paul flung all such considerations to the wind. He let his own ease and comfort go as if they were trifles light as air "In labors more abundant"; "in stripes above measure"; "in prisons more frequent"; "in deaths oft,"—but we all know the story. These are hardships which were voluntarily borne; deprivations and discomforts voluntarily submitted to, for the sake of showing his love to his Lord, and doing his Lord's work in the world.

It is impossible to read such statements, and to trace such a career without feeling that the apostle stated the case with literal accuracy when he declared that he

counted all things to be loss in this quest and service of Christ. Men called him a "fool." No matter. He was willing to be called a fool and to take the attitude in the world which would expose him to this charge "for Christ's sake." Men "despised" him. No matter. He was willing to be despised if only he could be secure in the love and favor of his Divine Lord. Men counted him "as the filth of the world"—"as the offscouring of all things." No matter. They might, if only he could succeed in winning Christ, and being found in Him, not having his own legal righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

With this much of examination given to the details of the passage under review, the way is open for passing on to some significent practical lessons.

1. *The first is that no man need ever expect to find his way into the life of God in Christ without giving up something.*

Self-denial is not now, and it never will be, an obsolete condition of discipleship.

In saying this the reference is not to the surrender of the will, the relinquishment of pride and unbelief. These things are matters of course.

But there will be some object of ambition, some end in life, some scheme, some desire of the heart, some darling worldly hope which in all probability will have to be yielded before there can be acceptance with Christ. The thing will be different with different men, but there will be something to surrender.

It was so with the young man who was required to go and sell all he had and give to the poor. It was so with those who first wanted to bury their dead. It was

so with those who left their nets that they might follow Jesus and become fishers of men. It was so with Matthew who sat at the receipt of customs.

In Christian communities where the methods and habits of life are more or less organized around faith in God, and public opinion has been so deeply leavened with the truth of the Gospel, the sacrifices to be made will not be so many as in other lands and generations. As a general rule one may become a confessed disciple of our Lord without in the least alienating or endangering friendship, or sealing the sources of any rational or helpful enjoyments. On the contrary one is more likely to be bettered in both these respects. Genuine friends draw closer, and all wholesome delights have a new charm added to them.

Nevertheless there will be sure to be something to be relinquished. It may be but a trivial thing,—it may be an important thing; but something most certainly. There will be some cherished interest, or end, or hope, or pleasure, across which this word "loss" will have to be written before there can be any conscious peace.

In the instance of a young man whom I knew somewhat intimately, this is what he had to give up. He wanted to be a lawyer. The brilliant men about him, when a boy; the men who seemed to have the most influence and the best positions in the circles to which he was attracted; the conspicuous and commanding men, were lawyers. Then, too, the facilities afforded members of the legal profession for a certain sort of very attractive study; their opportunities for wrestling before judges and juries; the highways freely opened to them to all that is best suited to satisfy ambition in the po-

litical world, threw around the law a peculiar fascination. But when this higher question of life in God through faith in Jesus Christ came to him, and he found his hands groping out after the Divine Hand, he saw "*Peace*" written as in golden letters—luminous and beautiful; but a little higher than he could reach, and right under the word in golden letters these other words: "Yours, but yours only on condition that you give up thought of the law and consent to be a messenger of the Everlasting Gospel." He waited. It was in vain. He saw others whom he knew to be good conscientious Christian men following the profession to which he aspired. It made no difference. Had he seen hundreds where he saw only one, just this path and no other would have been open to him. The still small voice kept saying it over in his soul. His own conscience joined in the enforcement of it. When he opened the Bible to search for light every page seemed to flash it back on him. Providence was in league against him. Not until he was ready to say, nay, to sing:

> "The dearest idol I have known,
> Whate'er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from thy throne,
> And worship only thee,"—

could he feel that Christ was his, and that he was secure in Christ.

Some such test, larger or smaller, is imposed almost always. Through some such gateway—too narrow to carry such large bundles of the world's stuff as we are very likely to wish to carry—Christ will require us to pass. This necessity was upon Paul. It was

upon Augustine. It was upon Madam Guyon. It was upon Dr. Payson. It was upon Lady Somerset. In one way or another it is upon us all.

2. *The second lesson is that Christ will be likely to be attractive and precious to us just in the ratio of our sacrifice for Him.*

In general this may be laid down as a law of Christian experience. It is through their sufferings and losses that Christ best interprets Himself to human souls.

How much, as has already been seen, was Christ to Paul! To him the "riches" of Christ were "unsearchable." To him the "love" of Christ was something passing "understanding." It was with the "blood" of Christ that he was brought "nigh to God." It was in the "strength" of Christ that he could "do all things." It was in the "Cross" of Christ that he "gloried." Christ was his "life." Christ was his "glorious liberty." In Christ he found his "inheritance." Through Christ he was "more than a conqueror." What things were "gain" to him he counted "loss" for Christ. By the grace of God he was inseparably bound up in God. Nothing could separate him from the love of God in Christ. It was largely because he had given up everything else and made Christ not only his trust for salvation, but his all in all. Through sacrifice and self-denial and fidelity he came into the spiritual attitude in which he could understand Christ and enter into the sublime meaning of His sublime life.

Well-nigh universally it is the same. When one gives up all his own earthly hopes he begins to appreciate what it was for Christ to lay aside the glory He had with the Father before the world was. When one

receives lashings and scourgings in his own body, he begins to understand the bitterness of the stripes with which we have been healed. When one is forced to wander homeless through the earth, "having no certain abiding place," he can somewhat better sympathize with Him who had not where to lay His head. When friends grow cold because of one's fidelity to duty, and berate him with sharp criticism and scorn, he is in the best of all conditions to realize the pang Christ must have felt when He came to His own and His own received Him not. When one has gone out after men and has tried to win them to purity and nobleness, but all in vain, the deep sorrow of the Jerusalem-lament of our Lord will seem no longer strange to him. When one has been forced to wear some crown of undeserved obloquy in the service of the Master, he can draw very much closer to Him who wore the crown of thorns.

There is no schoolmaster like this of giving up for Christ, and passing through experiences analogous to those of Christ, to teach us of His lowliness and pain. Profounder meanings than it has yet occurred to many of us to think, are in the words: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." When, in an appreciative sympathy and love, we go with Jesus down into all His ways of self-denial and burden-bearing, we not only come into a fresher and deeper knowledge of Him, but He comes near to us, and breathes upon us, and forms Himself within us the hope of glory The reason why devout and advanced Christians sometimes seem extravagant to us, as they give utterance to their love of Christ and their holy longing after Christ, is that we have not come more fully into the secret of Christ through sur-

render and cost. It is men and women who have really given up all for Christ who can chime in with Whittier when he sings:

"No pride of self Thy service hath,
No place for 'me' and 'mine';
Our human strength is weakness, death
Our life, apart from thine.

Apart from Thee, all gain is loss,
All labor vainly done;
The solemn shadow of Thy cross
Is better than the sun.

Alone, O Love ineffable;
Thy saving name is given;
To turn aside from Thee is hell,
To walk with Thee is heaven.

Deep strike Thy roots, O heavenly Vine!
Within our earthly sod,
Most human and yet most divine,
The flower of man and God."

3. *A third lesson is that testimony for Christ will have a value and influence, other things being equal, correspondent to what is known to have been the cost of the utterance of the testimony.*

Daniel is conspicuous among the names which are moral forces in the world because he put his life in jeopardy for God. His testimony was rendered in the face of the supreme risk a man can run. The early Christian Church saw in Jeremiah one of the clearest and closest personal types of Christ. It was because of his sufferings and his fidelity in spite of his sufferings. Dr. Horton in his Yale Lectures calls him the greatest of the prophets. No matter what abuse was heaped upon him, what deprivations he might be called on to

endure, he would not yield his loyalty to God, nor cease being the clear stern voice of God to a sinning people. He was persecuted; he was loaded with contempt; he was thrust into prison, and into narrow sickening confinement; but he never failed in his faith, nor in his duty to truth. Who that reads the story of Savonarola is not thrilled through and through. They hung him and burned his dead body, and flung his ashes into the Arno, there in his beautiful city of Florence. He might have avoided it all,—the intrigues and assaults of the papal power, the mad opposition of the fickle mob, and the cruel tortures of blood-thirsty officials, the imprisonment, the ignominious death,—by softening his tone and putting a little bit more of the spirit of compromise into his treatment of current iniquities. But he said: "No. Truth is truth, and duty is duty; and I will stand by the truth, and I will follow duty at whatever sacrifice." He was not a Protestant, but a devout Catholic; nevertheless Martin Luther thought he ought to be crowned and evermore hailed as one of the illustrious martyrs of the Reformation. His admirers have built a very beautiful fountain on the spot where his body was burned, and the waters flow through it, pure and sweet, as an emblem of the fulness of his life and of the wholesome influence he has had on the hearts of men. The value of his life is immensely heightened in the estimation of thoughtful men because it stood for conscience and was sealed in blood. Dr. Moffat came to be the power he was in the missionary world and among the churches for the reason that his career signified so much in the way of cost. When he crossed the Orange river, not far now from eighty years ago, and began his work among the Bechuana Tribes, he

did not know their language, and there was no one to teach him. The people were both filthy and ferocious. But he made his home amongst them, and went in and out before them, toiling on, bearing and forbearing, till he had mastered their language and won their hearts, Testimony from such a man to the truth of Christ, and to the constraining and renewing energy of Christ, has a worth not to be discredited both to those to whom he goes and to those whom he leaves behind.

The moment any man is willing to give up anything, or to suffer for a cause, more especially for the cause of Christ, he is accorded sincerity, and his words have weight. The words of Paul would not have a hundredth part the influence over us which they do have, were they not backed up and indorsed over to us by deprivations and surrenders and sufferings which attest their genuineness beyond all gainsaying.

Hence just as there is a call for sacrifice, and a willingness to make sacrifice, and just as it is seen that sacrifices have been made, do the words and lives of men to-day become morally efficient. If a man is fond of drink, but consents to give up drink for Christ's sake; if a man is fond of gambling, but gladly consents to let gambling go for Christ's sake; if a man is fond of worldly amusements, such amusements as are constantly working ruin to the young, and also to some who are no longer young, but will cheerfully forego them for Christ's sake; if a man is hard and selfish, and is known to be by all with whom he has any association or dealing, but lets it all go, and becomes tender and consecrated and helpful for Christ's sake; if a man is specially determined and bitter in his denunciation of Christianity, as an atheist

or an infidel might be, but under the influence of the Spirit yields to a better mind, and gives his oppositions all up for Christ's sake, straightway the witnessing of such a man becomes commanding, and is potential to a high degree along the lines in which his own shortcomings or resistencies have been most conspicuous. If there be anyone anywhere whose privilege it is to be able to show to the world that his love for Christ, his trust in Christ, his devotion to Christ, is so great that he has been willing to pay something for it,—to pay something for it in the way of the surrender of worldly profits, or associations or amusement and pleasure, or self-confidence, or popularity,—he may be assured he has a privilege an angel might covet. For a man to be able to stand up and demonstrate to his fellow-men that Christ is more to him than all the world beside,—more than its gains, more than its indulgences, more than its honors, is a sublime opportunity.

4. *A fourth lesson is that after all the gains are immeasurably more than the losses which come from taking a pronounced stand, and making even the largest surrenders in fidelity to Jesus Christ.*

Paul had his humiliation of pride and will; but he had his exaltation in Christ, and his moods of spiritual vision in which he saw things it was not possible for him to utter. Paul had his stripes; but he also had his joys. His stripes were for an hour; his joys were forever. Paul had his deprivations, but in place of the things taken from him or given up he had his heirship to an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. Paul had his enemies,—enemies who would gladly have put him to death; but he

had the fellowship of Him who loved him and gave Himself for him, and was always with him Paul met death at last in consequence of his devotion to the faith of the Son of God; but who will believe that he would have come back again out of the fellowship and glories of heaven for the sake of any satisfaction to be found here on earth?

But the thought now pressed is that the pains we suffer in virtue of our coming into obedience to Christ, and the difficulties we encounter in our giving up of some things, and taking up other things, are not half so great as we fancy they may be. There are helps by the way, and compensations, which are not thought of till one is in the struggle. Abraham had a hard command laid upon him. He was to go out from his country and his kindred, to a land of which he had not yet been told. It was a painful position in which to be placed. But going straight forward, and doing what God told him to do, he found that God would take care of him. It was the same when he was put to the hard task of offering Isaac in sacrifice. If we are obedient and faithful, we, too, shall have our "*Jehovah-jirehs*," and "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

Besides when one has consented to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, all legitimate earthly satisfactions are elevated and sanctified. In one of his poems the quaint Francis Quarles tells us how he loves the "earth," and the "air," and the "sea," and the "heavens," which he calls the spangled suburbs of the Celestial City; but to find a satisfaction in which he can rest, he has to strike through all these outward facts and forms to God and see them in Him. It is only in seeing them in His light, and enjoy-

ing them in the consciousness of His presence, that they yield their richest harvests of joy.

"If not possessed, if not enjoyed in Thee
What's earth, or sea, or air, or heaven, to me?

Without Thy presence, wealth is bags of cares;
Wisdom but folly; joy, disquiet, sadness;
Friendship is treason, and delights are snares;
Pleasures but pain, and mirth but pleasing madness.
Without Thee, Lord, things be not what they be,
Nor have their being, when compared with Thee.

In having all things, and not Thee, what have I?
Not having Thee, what have my labors got?
Let me enjoy but Thee, what further crave I?
And having Thee alone what have I not?
I wish nor sea, nor land, nor would I be
Possessed of heaven, heaven unpossessed of Thee."

This being the fact it follows naturally that less stress is to be laid on the "losses," and more on the "gains" in turning from the world and its trusts and hopes and joys, to the Lord Jesus Christ. To me it seems well-nigh unthinkable how any man who has an appreciation of the sacredness and grandeur of the truth, and of his own being, and of the surpassing dignity of a life consecrated to ends which have on them the benediction of God, can hesitate for a moment to identify himself and all his interests and all his aims with Jesus Christ. The marvel is that everybody does not break out at once with the exclamation: "All things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." For this is the way not only to cleanse the life, and make it a moral and spiritual force, but to fill it with peace and joy.

Fellowship with the Sufferings of Christ.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." —*Phil. 3:10–11.*

XII.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

These words uncover one of the profoundest and most sacred experiences into which a human soul can enter. It is this experience which is now to be considered. Following the apostle in one of the clauses of the passage we may fitly call it: *Fellowship With The Sufferings Of Christ.*

The specific aim here announced is the knowledge of Christ—"that I may know him." The ultimate object of it all is the resurrection of the soul to an immortal blessedness—"if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." It was through knowing Christ in the vital way in which He is known to men while they are yet here on earth, when faith accepts Him, and love takes Him into the heart, and the life is one of obedience to His will, that Paul expected to have share in the joy and glory of those who are permitted to be with Christ, where He is, in heaven.

But lying between this specific aim—the knowledge of Christ, and the ultimate object of his aspiration—a resurrection to glory, there is the expression of two desires, both of which, so far as the form of statement is concerned, may be considered incidental or tributary, to what goes before and follows after. They disclose methods by which the knowledge is secured in ampler degree, and the resurrection to endless life becomes more assured.

The first of these desires is the desire to know Christ in the power of His resurrection—"that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." He wants to know Christ just as He is: Christ in His divine personality; Christ as the Son of God and the manifestation of God in the flesh. But he wants to know Christ in this particular feature of Him—Christ in His resurrection power; "and the power of His resurrection."

This "power of His resurrection" may mean two things.

1. It may mean the power exerted in raising Christ from the dead. There is a passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, 1:18–20, which seems to support this view: "having the eyes of your heart enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."

2. It may mean the power with which the resurrection from the dead invested Him. This is more likely the meaning here. It is to know the power of the resurrection of Christ through a daily experience of this power. The resurrection of Christ is the pledge of the forgiveness of the believer, and the blotting out of his sins, and the bestowing upon him of the Holy Spirit. It was this line of thought which Peter followed in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. This is what Paul demonstrated to the Corinthian disciples, that unless it be a fact that Christ rose from the dead they were still in their sins; but his resurrection became a guarantee of their forgiveness.

Hence, to know Christ in the power of His resurrection is to know Him in His saving grace, in the regenerating energy of His life, in the guidance and comfort and might of the Spirit with which He endows us, in the insight and growth which He fosters, and in the glad hope which His presence in the soul awakens. It is to know Him as One with whom we died unto sin and with whom we were made alive and rose again unto justification and the assurance of a blessed immortality. It is to feel a quickening and stimulating influence at work on our whole spiritual nature. "We were buried therefore with Him through baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life."

The second of these desires is the desire to know Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. This knowledge—knowing Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings—is key to all the other knowledge. We can never realize to the full what is the power of the resurrection of Christ till we have entered into some measure of partnership with Him in His agonies.

To try to understand a little better what this requires, and to appreciate in a higher degree what will come to each of us from a completer fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the business, as has already been announced, which is now in hand.

Too many of us, it is to be feared, stop short in our Christian experience at just this point of fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.

We exercise trust in Christ; place all our dependence on Him for salvation, and look to Him and Him only for a sufficient righteousness; but we have very little

idea of what it is to struggle for participation in the agony of redeeming love. We think of ourselves simply as having been suffered for. We say: He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was bruised for our iniquities; and there the matter ends. The peace and the rest are accepted, the crown and the righteousness of Christ; but we come too near forgetting with what bloody sweat and awful pang this precious redemption was brought to us.

But the conditions of the largest and highest Christian life take us back into the closest companionship with Christ of which we are capable, in the humiliation He knew, in the burdens He bore, and in the unutterable distresses of Gethsemane and Cavalry. Striving to be like Christ here, and hoping to be with Him hereafter, the disciple needs to go back frequently and walk hand in hand with Him through the windings and sorrowings of His human life. This was Paul's feeling. He wanted to be admitted into a kind of co-partnership in the very sufferings and shame of the cross. He desired fellowship with His sufferings, and conformity unto His death. This, in large measure, he secured. He had thought so much about the Redeemer's sufferings, and in his sympathy had entered so fully into them, and withal had mastered to such a degree the evil passions of his own nature, that at last he did not hesitate to say he had "been crucified with Christ." So deep, so sincere, so habitual, was the fellowship of the great apostle with the sufferings of the Savior, that the loneliness of Jesus, and the contradictions He encountered, and the buffetings and scorn He was forced to meet, and the bitterness of the moment when even God seemed to forsake Him, were made his own. The turning away

from Him of those who should have received Him, the taunts of the crowd, the nails driven into the hands and the feet, the spear thrust into the side, the sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin under which He bowed when He bore in His own body the sins of the whole world, were made to pass through the alembic of his own soul, and become a part of his own experience.

The question now arises how may we come, each of us and all of us together, into this fellowship with the sufferings of Christ? The terms of it as it lies in my mind, are four, neither one of which can be left out.

I. *There must be a clear and intelligent apprehension of the facts, viewed as facts, of Christ's sufferings.*

With what else there is to be said, in the time allotted, this thought cannot be elaborated. But it lies at the basis of any real fellowship with our Divine Lord in the humiliation and agony He endured in His earthly career. Pains must be taken to master the story of His life in all its ins and outs. There are multitudes of Christians who know the biography of Jesus of Nazareth, not in the details of it, but only in the same general way in which they know the biography of Cæsar or Charlemagne, or Luther, or Washington. Particularly is this true of the succession of events of the strange and awful week which culminated in the crucifixion.

It was not all suffering. There were sunshine and joy even in Christ's life. There was a joy set before Him for which He gladly endured the cross and despised all shame. Save for one dreadful hour, an hour which, if we only understood it, would be sure to mean to us more than any other hour within the limits of recorded time, He was in the open communion of the Father, and received from Him the honor the world de-

nied Him. But for all this He was pre-eminently the Man of Sorrows—from Manger to Tomb, the Man of Sorrows. We make no headway in our efforts at sympathizing with the sufferings of Christ, till we master the facts of His sufferings. We must be able to take the web of His life to pieces, and see what strands in it give the hue and stamp of pain.

It may seem a mere commonplace utterance to some, and to other some it may seem a very strange assertion to make in view of all the instruction received in Sunday-schools, and in homes, and from private reading, and from pulpit discourses, that, with large numbers, the fundamental lack is a lack of knowledge. The conditions of sympathy are not met in that the particulars in which Christ suffered are not marshalled with sufficient clearness and order in the mind. We know the facts in general, but we do not know them in the minuteness which gives them firm lodgement in the understanding, and power over the imagination and a tender quickening influence upon the heart.

II. *There must be a clear and intelligent apprehension of the necessity of the sufferings of Christ, in order to any true fellowship with Him in these sufferings.*

Was there need of this suffering? Gather up the facts, admit their force and pertinency, acknowledge the infinite sorrow which they indicate; but after all the question recurs: Was there need of this suffering? Was there some exigency lying back and calling for it?

This is largely what determines sympathy. Suffering is sanctified, and clothed with an irresistible power over the heart when there is an end so high and holy and imperative that it is easily seen to be a fit thing to endure

pain for it. If a man provokes a duel, and in vindication of mere personal pique, or wounded vanity, or braggart prowess, takes the field and receives a painful and fatal shot, it is impossible to sympathize with him as with the gallant and heroic soldier who, from a simple sense of duty, nobly falls in defense of the imperilled liberties of his country. Any man in distress awakens pity; but in how many instances is the pity modified and turned aside by the thought that it was the indolence, or extravagance, or perversity, or self-indulgence, or crime of the victim himself which brought him into the wretched and deplorable condition in which he has been discovered. Is not this the world's judgment in multitudes of instances—a cold, harsh judgment, it is true, but still the judgment—"Good enough for him." If men will run into reckless, vicious, and licentious courses, with their eyes wide open they must expect to find the compassion of their fellow-men a great deal modified and lessened toward them.

Now ought Christ to have suffered? Was there any commanding necessity laid upon Him to go through what He experienced? Was there any interest at stake of enough importance to justify the humiliation of the cradle and the pang and shame of the cross? Or if there were vast concerns in issue, was there no other way to gain the end?

The answer is brief, but it is all-sufficient: Men were sinners,—under the condemnation of the law, helpless and hopeless, save as aid should come to them from some source outside of themselves. All the discoveries and advances of science, all the moral progress the world has made or shall make, because of its art and its literature and its political economies, all the new devices

and pretenses sought out by infidelity and agnosticism, will not alter by so much as a hair's breadth this one fact,—men were, and men are, until rescued by the interposition and grace of God, helplessly and hopelessly in the grip of the law they have broken.

Were we to enter into a full discussion of this question of the necessity of the sufferings of Christ, we should have these factors along with others in the problem,—the character of God, the penalty of the law, the preciousness of the soul, the deep sinfulness of transgression, the inadequacy of simple repentance for wrong doing, and the far-off issues of guilt. But we condense it all into a single word when we say—sin. Sin is the fact which undertones the whole sad story of the cross, and the hinge on which turns the necessity of an atoning sacrifice. Sin is what brought the Son of God down out of the heavens to tabernacle here in the flesh. Sin is what led Him to walk through all the sorrowing ways of our human life. No other way was there—or, at any rate, no other way which seemed so suitable in the estimation of infinite wisdom and infinite love,—than this of vicarious suffering. If a man has no sense of sin; does not believe in sin, but thinks that what the Scriptures call sin is only a mistake, or a sort of amiable folly, then he will not be likely to perceive that there was any deep stress of need for the dying of Christ to atone for sin. But if he has some fit sense of it, and of the michievous way in which it relates itself to the high welfare of the soul, and the character of God, and the order and interest of the moral universe, the necessity of the sufferings of Christ will become clear to his mind. He will be ready to say "yes" to Christ's own

statement that it behooved Him to suffer, and by suffering to open a way of joy to all.

III. *There must be a personal acceptance of the results made possible to men by these sufferings of Christ.*

This suggestion brings the question close home. Christ came into the world, and He sufferred and died to save sinners. What He especially requires in the way of regard and sympathy is co-operation with Him in this high redemptive aim to the extent of each individual's giving himself up to a life of faith in His Name.

Here then we have a test, Christ is a Divine Redeemer —or—He is not. If He be the Redeemer of men, then a mere poetic sentimental regard is not enough. A high reverence such as is felt for the great and good of all ages, is not enough. Nor is it enough to take the incidental truths which He developed and weave them into social and moral compacts for the regulation of communities. It is simply impossible for me to think that men are placing an acceptable offering upon the altar when they patronizingly call Jesus "a beautiful character," but deny to Him the energy and mission of a Divine Redeemer. This is not the sympathy with the sufferings of Christ into which Paul came. We must lay our lives at His feet, and accept the salvation He brings, and on the terms on which He brings it. There must be personal recognition of His claim, and personal surrender to His will. One may master all the facts of the life of Christ,—realize why He suffered, admire His character, regret His pain and sorrow; but unless one believes in Him and embraces the opportu-

nity to secure the salvation He brings, so that he can say, "I am His and He is mine," there is and there can be no real genuine sympathy with Him.

IV. *There must be willingness to endure all the pains and losses and crosses which the legitimate service of Christ calls for.*

Legitimate service, bear in mind. Christ did not run into needless straits of anguish, though He never turned aside from any which duty required Him to meet. A man is not to make a martyr of himself for the sake of the sufferings incident to martyrdom. A man is not to make himself needlessly obnoxious for the sake of having an opportunity, like his Divine Master before him, to receive buffets and reproaches and scorn. A man is not to court pains which no need to be borne, and to undertake services which are of no consequence when rendered, in order to acquire discipline through the hardness and severity of them. Simon Stylites, standing there on the top of his broken pillar, starving, thirsting, freezing, aching to death, shows indeed wonderful firmness of will, much power of patient endurance, admirable devotion, sincerity and earnestness of purpose; but then—Simon Stylites had no business to be standing there on the top of his broken pillar. It was his rather to be down on the solid earth, preaching the Gospel, caring for the poor and wronged, going about doing good, and living a sweet, wholesome life. One is not to invent forms of self-denial which the Master has never appointed. The duty is to go straight on—doing the work and discharging the trusts imposed by Christ, and manfully and patiently meeting whatever of inconvenience or loss or sorrow or suffering, may fall in the way in consequence. It is not the hardships

which are out of the way, but in the way, which one is to endure.

At the same time it is not to be forgotten that now and evermore the Christian life here on earth is one of self-denial. "There is no other way unto life," says one who, though he withdrew from the active affairs of the world, yet in large measure justified his withdrawal by the production of thoughts and meditations which have been the choice spiritual nourishment of many souls in the subsequent generations,—"there is no other way unto life, and unto true inward peace than the way of the Holy Cross, and of daily self-denial. Go where thou wilt, seek whatever thou wilt, thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the Holy Cross. Prepare thyself to bear many adversities and troubles in this sorrowing life; for so it will be with thee. Christ's life was a cross and a martyrdom. The cross, therefore, is always ready and everywhere waits for thee."

Some things in the way of peril and hardship are well behind us. It is not likely we shall any of us be called upon to testify our zeal for the truth and our fidelity to Christian principles by giving our bodies to be burned. There may be conflicts we cannot foresee, and can only dimly conjecture; but it looks now, as if we, at least, should be permitted to worship God unto the end, under our own vine and figtree, and according to the dictates of our own conscience, with none to molest us, or make us afraid.

Nevertheless, as has already been said, this Christian life is, always has been, and always will be, a life of self-denial. A man cannot be a Christian and live up on the high levels of faith and love and consecration,

and do just as one pleases to do who is not a Christian, and lives on the lower level of worldliness.

The Christian life is a life against the grain of our perverted natures. It is a life at warfare with the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes and the vainglory which rules in the human heart. While the soul must live in the world it is yet a struggle to live above the world. Only by subduing every passion and appetite and desire to such an extent that the whole being is subordinated to the will of God, and all the faculties are con-joined in loyalty, and it is the highest pleasure to be pleasing to the Father, as the Son of God was pleasing to Him, can anyone altogether outgrow the need of self-denial and sacrifice for Christ's sake. A genuine earnest Christian life is a life in which a man must say "No," not only to many an evil solicitation, but to many a beckoning pleasure also. It is a life of burden-bearing; and it is a life in which the highest fidelities possible to the soul are to be brought into exhibition. This is the condition of discipleship, imposed not by councils and assemblies and synods and creeds, but by our Divine Lord Himself,—self-denial, cross-bearing, and faithfulness. Some Christians seem to make it a practise to do for Christ just what they like to do, just what it is agreeable to them to do, just what it costs them nothing to do, no preparation, no shrinking, no embarrassment, no humiliation, no sacrifice, no discomfort of any sort. But when they are approached with requests which involve the taking of higher ground, and doing something which has pain in it, or limitation of material possessions or ease, or the crucifixion of taste, there is always some excuse or evasion. Men complain of cas-

uistry. What casuists men are in dealing with their own souls.

Dear old Richard Baxter has said: "A cheap religion is not usually accompanied with any notable degree of comfort. Although the person be a sincere-hearted Christian, he cannot have much peace or joy. A confirmed Christian is one who taketh self-denial for one half of his religion." With a somewhat ruggeder Saxon John Bunyan has said: "If thou wouldst be faithful to do the work that God hath appointed thee to do in the world for His name, then beware that thou do not stop and stick where hard work comes before thee. The word and Spirit of God come sometimes like chain-shots to us, as if they would cut down all, as when Abraham was to offer up Isaac. Oh, how willingly would our flesh and blood escape the cross of Christ." This is all true—true to-day, to-morrow, and every day.

It is a matter which admits of no debate that there is too much daintiness in our religion. There is too much picking and choosing of service, or turning the thing over to somebody else to do, or turning from it altogether, without much care whether the thing is done or not. But it is evident we can never get into any fellowship or symypathy with Christ in His sufferings, if we are not ready for pain and toils and real sacrifices in His behalf. If we do not know Christ in his sufferings,—Christ in His humiliation,—Christ in the sensitive quivering He must have experienced under reproaches,—Christ in the inexpressible and pathetic tenderness of His grief at seeing those He came to save refuse to be saved by Him,—Christ in the mysterious agony of the garden and in the further and still more awful agony of the cross, which moved the heavens and

the earth to a sympathetic compassion—do we really know Him at all? The Man of Sorrows—the suffering Savior—the crucified Son of God—can there be any deep fellowship with Him without some sort of practical entering into this sorrow and this suffering and this crucifixion? This is the cry of one who wants to be like Christ, and know him fully:

"Humbly while my soul doth prove
Sweetest joys of pardoning love,
Still, my Savior doth it yearn,
Love's deep mystery to learn.
In the shadow of Thy cross,
Counting earthly gain but loss,
Breathing still its fervent plea,
For a closer life with Thee,
By that high and holy thing,
Fellowship in suffering."

There will be power and comfort and victory in our Christian lives when there is more in them to justify us in saying we have been crucified with Christ, and are seeking to be conformed to His death. This was the secret of the tremendous aggressiveness of Paul in preaching the Gospel, and of his joy in God, and of his superiority to all that malignant and designing men could do to him—his sympathetic identity with Christ all up and down the range of His experience when here upon earth. If he had been asked what moved him to his prodigious and perilous efforts to spread abroad the knowledge of salvation through the crucified Redeemer he would have answered: "The love of Christ constraineth me." If he had been remonstrated with against making such sacrifices of reputation and fortune in this effort to acquaint all men with the way of life, his ready reply would have been: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." If

it had been intimated to him that his career, if persisted in, would surely lead to martyrdom, with something like a smile of triumph on his face, he would have pointed away to Him who laid down a life of infinite value on the cross and said: "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." If friends, near and dear, had turned from him, and declared that he was bringing reproach on his name and character by this identification so close with the despised Nazarene, they would have heard him exclaim in tones of exultation: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Christian Aspiration.

"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended: but one thing *I do*, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you: only, whereunto we have already attained, by that same *rule* let us walk."—*Phil. 3: 12–16.*

XIII.

CHRISTIAN ASPIRATION.

With these words before us it hardly needs formal announcement that the theme of our present meditation is to be: *Christian Aspiration.*

Christian Aspiration, like all aspiration which is worthy of the name, has in it three distinct elements. These three distinct elements are outlined in one clause and another of the passage now under consideraton, and will be made to appear as we proceed with our study.

I. *The first element is a well defined feeling of dissatisfaction with one's present condition and attainments.*

This dissatisfaction with his present condition and attainments the apostle declares and repeats. His first statement is: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect." His second statement is: "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended." The apostle had had a peculiar and impressive conversion; but this initial experience of the grace of God had not brought to him all God had in store for him, nor rounded out his Christian character into completeness. The earnest avowal he had just made of his abandonment of every trust for salvation except his trust in Christ, and of his entire surrender to Him, and his determination to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and to become conformed unto His death, might lead some to suppose that in his own estimation he had reached

the heights of perfection; but he hastened to repudiate this possible inference, and said: "No, I did not reach all there is in the Christian life at once; nor have I yet arrived at the point of spiritual development where there is nothing beyond." He had not "already obtained." He was not "already made perfect." Nor had he apprehended ,or laid hold upon, that for which he had been apprehended, or laid hold upon, by Jesus Christ. When in a mad, persecuting spirit, this future apostle was on his way to Damascus, our Lord had arrested him, and He had done it with a definite object, both as respects his character and his work, in view; and Paul very soon came to have some notion of what this object was; but with all his sincere and determined effort, all his self-conflicts and masteries, all his openness to the tuition of the Spirit, all his varied and successful labors in the Kingdom, all his years of growth in likeness to Jesus, he was constrained to say he was still lacking in the full apprehension of that for which he had been apprehended by Christ. "I count not myself yet to have apprehended."

This was Paul's attitude. He saw and felt and frankly acknowledged his incompleteness. As we shall have occasion to note before we are through, he meant to get up out of this state in which he found himself into something better; he meant to apprehend more fully that for which he had been apprehended; he meant to win the prize; but as yet the final triumphs of the high calling were out before him,—an aim to kindle enthusiasm and stir endeavor. At the moment when he was writing he knew he was far from perfection; he knew he had not obtained all that was obtainable in a life of communion with God and of service in the King-

dom; he knew the crowning victory was something still to be won, and that he had not climbed to the heights where he might rest.

This a wholesome and promising view for a Christian man to take of the situation as respects his own spiritual attainments. There will be no struggle to better one's condition until there is first a profound conviction that one's condition admits of being bettered and ought to be bettered. Without a lively sense of deficiency, of incompleteness, of imperfection, there will be no impulse and longing for a higher knowledge of God, and for a closer walk with God. There will be no eager and compelling desire for a character moulded more nearly on the purity and helpfulness of the faultless Nazarene. Unless there is unrest in one's own heart, and impatience because so little progress has been made in realizing the graces of a Christian discipleship there will be little likelihood of any real spiritual progress.

When a man says, not in so many words, it may be, but practically: "I know all I care to know,—I am as familiar with the Bible as I wish to be,—I have as intimate a fellowship with God, and as full and clear an understanding of His secrets, and as large a measure of His comfort and grace as it seems to me worth while to try to secure,—I have as much dread of sin, and as much mastery over easily besetting sins, as appears to be desirable,—the truth is just as precious to me, and the thought of righteousness is just as quickening, and the contemplation of heaven and the heavenly home lifts my soul into just as much rapture, as I care to experience,—and I am not alarmed by the extent of the dominion the world has over me, nor inwardly rebuked because of any lack of zeal in work for the Kingdom," it is

clear he can neither get on, nor even hold his own.

Whether it be religious conceit, or indifference to religious interests and aims, which rules in the heart, aspiration dies. It is only when a man feels with all the sincerity and force of an honest nature that he is not what he ought to be in his Christian faith and love and purity and hope and joy, that his experiences of the indwelling of the Spirit and communion with Christ are not what they might be in depth and richness, that divine motives will have any appreciable influence over him to take him forward. There is a discontent which is weakening and sinful. It is the discontent of one who is always finding fault with God and the allotments of God's providence, and belittling God's mercies. But there is also a discontent which is wholesome, stimulating; it is the discontent of moral and spiritual imperfection. This is the discontent which foreruns and conditions upward movements of soul.

With what fitness might the members of our churches everywhere take this position of the apostle in regard to their attainments. How we might all of us blush with a sense of reproof at seeing the apostle fall into this attitude which it hardly ever occurs to us to acknowledge to our own hearts, much less publish abroad, when we realize to what an alarming extent we come short in this achievement of Christian maturity and completeness. For recall who Paul was. Think of his faith, of his experience, of his consecration, of the marvelous work he had done up to the time this epistle was written, of the full tides of light and love which had flowed in upon his mind and heart from the mind and heart of God, and what competency he had to instruct the ages in the mystery and saving power of the cross, and of the amaz-

ing, if not matchless, stature of manhood in Christ Jesus into which he had grown. He was a man of the centuries; and his natural abilities, his acquisitions in the realms of things divine, his achievements for Christ and humanity, his uncalculating devotion of every faculty and all the energy he possessed to ends which have on them the benediction of God, and his superb character, combine to awaken in us a well-nigh boundless admiration. Yet he was not able to escape a feeling of his own imperfection. He thought he ought to be better; further on in his knowledge of God; more like Jesus Christ in the whole temper of his mind.

Self-satisfaction is the ruin of many a Christian man and woman. Not till they realize how narrow and meager and unfruitful their lives are will Christian men and women aspire to better things.

II. *A second element in Christian aspiration as illustrated in the words of the apostle is an exalted conception of the attainments and character befitting one who has named the name of Christ.*

Paul had lofty views and lofty standards of the Christian life. It was because he saw so much out before him still to be gained that what he had already gained seemed so poor and unsatisfactory. We find his thought condensed into the one sublime phrase: "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." His idea of the object for which he had been apprehended by Christ took shape in this expression: "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He felt himself to be imperfect, and he wanted to be perfect: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect"; but perfection to him would be realized in realizing "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Literally "the high calling" means "the above call-

ing," or the calling from "above." It is substantially the same as the phrase "heavenly calling" found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It does not signify the calling of ourselves upward to heaven, though this, of course, is involved in it; but the calling we receive from Him who is "above," or in heaven. "The high calling of God in Christ Jesus," is God's call to our souls. In Christ Jesus, and through Christ Jesus, He calls us to be His children, and He calls us to be His co-workers, and He calls us to share in the blessings and joys He has prepared for those who are loyal to His will. "The high calling of God in Christ Jesus," is a call to obedience, is a call to purity, is a call to high and ennobling service, is a call to divine fellowship. It is the highest call which ever falls on mortal ears.

This was Paul's aspiration—an aspiration to answer perfectly through thought and will and life to the call which God addressed to him. It was by cherishing this aspiration and yielding his whole nature to it that he utilized to best advantage his discontent.

Every man who would register progress in knowledge and grace must pursue a similar policy. He must have exalted conceptions of Christian privilege and duty and character. Mere discontent is not enough. It is as essential that one have lofty views and lofty standards of discipleship to Jesus Christ, if sympathy with Christian aims and activities is to be stirred, and the blood set in healthy motion, as it is that one have a suitable notion of the unsatisfactoriness of his present conditions. Experience in all spheres supports this. The lawyer, the teacher, the physician, the merchant, the artist, the writer, the scholar, who is simply out of sorts with himself as he is, and with such achievements as he

has hitherto made; but who has no clear cut views of better things possible to him, and who hears no voices calling him to rise to higher heights and to win worthier victories, will make no headway. Not by chance, and not altogether for the reason that they have genius, do our men of letters and art score their magnificent successes; but because they have conceptions of what their work calls for, and standards of measurement with which to judge their work which tax skill and energy to the utmost.

Some of the most pathetic passages in literature are the stories of the struggles of poets and painters and sculptors to come up to their own conceptions and give some sort of fit expression to the thought which was burning in the soul and seeking utterance.

Tennyson was seventeen years in writing "In Memoriam." It was because he had a conception which dominated all his thinking and feeling, and held him to his task through this long period, that we have "In Memoriam." The little garden song in "Maud" he wrote and re-wrote fifty times before he ventured to give it to the public. His own imagination had come under the spell of it, and he would not sing it in the ear of the world until, like the lark soaring up into the sky, he could sing it in clear and unfaltering notes.

Mrs. Opie the wife of John Opie, the distinguished portrait painter, who was sometimes called the "Cornish Wonder," has said: "During the nine years that I was his wife I never saw him satisfied with one of his productions; and often, very often, have I seen him enter my sitting-room, and throwing himself in an agony of despondency on the sofa, exclaim: 'I never, never shall be a painter as long as I live.'" The man had conceptions

of his art which seemed to mock him,—standards of excellence which seemed to baffle him; but it was because of these conceptions and standards, and his loyalty to them, that he became one of the great artists of his nation, and left pictures of enduring fame.

Thorwaldsen, so we are told, saw in the measure of satisfaction he took in one of his completed statues an evidence of waning power. His method of reasoning was that if his mind were alert, and full of enthusiasm, and up to the old creative line of energy, he would be sure to see many things to criticise. Cunning as his hand might be, his brain, so long as it was in the best condition, would be still more cunning, and he could formulate images in his mind which he could not fashion to perfection in marble.

To us who are not dowered with poetic or artistic gifts it seems hardly possible that Homer and Virgil and Dante and the immortal Shakespeare, or that Phidias and Raphael and Angelo and Thorwaldsen, ever had any difficulty in giving expression to their ideas, or that they could have gone much further in winning triumphs in their several departments; but we may be sure they were, each and all of them, tormented with unrealized conceptions. We may be sure, too, it was because they were tormented—possessed, haunted, led on by visions which were never on land or sea, that they won their splendid triumphs, and laid the foundations of their imperishable renown. They had high conceptions, and they were true to them.

This is the principle to which the apostle conformed, and the rule under which he worked, in making his Christian attainments and doing his Christian duties, and building up his Christian character. Neither poet,

nor painter, nor sculptor ever toiled in the realm of his chosen art with a more burning enthusiasm, or a more patient fidelity to make his thought emerge in a more perfect form, than did Paul to lift his whole being —every power and faculty, every capability and every possibility, up into the light of the face of God and into harmony with the will of God. He saw what he might be, and the vision of it throbbed and thrilled along every fiber of his eager soul. From the first moment when he comes into view before us as a Christian till the last he was always working under the influence of an exalted and exalting conception of the Christian life

It was the only safe course. Artists who are jealous of their skill and fame, never permit themselves, if they can help it, to look upon a bad picture. It would seem as if Paul never allowed his thought to wander off into contemplation of any low and unworthy standard of Christian attainment and character. For a working aim he would tolerate nothing short of "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,"—nothing short of a type of manhood whose measure is "perfection in Christ." What he sought for these Philippian brethren was first of all what he sought for himself: "This I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offense unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

A moment ago the question was: "Is not the sense of imperfection too feeble in us? Is not the disposition quite too general to be content with low apprehensions and attainments in Christian experience?" The question

now is: "Are there not too many of us who refuse to be controlled by anything like a large and inspiring thought of what is becoming in us and possible to us as partakers by faith in the life of the Son of God?" Or to put the question in another phrase: "Are there not too many of us who have no clear and well-defined view of what the Christian life is, and what it must be if it be a Christian life at all?" In short is it not true that in a large number of instances we have failed wholly to come under the power and guidance of these conceptions of the Christian life which fill us with enthusiasm for the Master and lift us above the world?

Suppose each one of us were to sit down and write out his idea of the Christian character, just as we shape it to our own minds, with nothing of good toward which we struggle omitted, and with nothing of evil toward which we are tolerant left out; and then were to place this side by side of the notion of the Christian character which the Scriptures furnish us, would there not be startling misfits and incongruities? It is a matter of humiliation and tears that the conceptions and standards of the Christian life are so low with such large numbers of men and women who claim to be followers of our Divine Lord! The actions of these people are regulated, not by the will of God, but by their own whims, or tastes, or the public opinion of the hour. There is and there can be no Christian aspiration until there are Christian conceptions and aims and standards to challenge realization in the life.

III. *A third element in Christian Aspiration, as set forth and exemplified by the apostle, is the resolute determination to translate the highest conceptions one*

may have of Christian attainment and Christian character into terms of life.

This is what we have in the passage under review,—a resolute determination on the part of Paul to illustrate his theories in his practice, and to embody his lofty ideas in a real nobility of soul. His words are fairly hot with this purpose; and it is not easy to read them without yielding to the on-sweep of their rushing eagerness. "But I press on." As we have seen he did not feel that he had obtained everything at once. He was not yet perfect. But he was pressing on,—exerting himself with all his might, and using his utmost skill, to realize the vision of perfection which flamed in splendor before his eyes. "But one thing I do,"—many things on the surface and to outward appearance, but one central and controlling thing, "forgetting the things which are behind,"—whether they be achievements won and advantages gained in which one might be tempted to rest satisfied, or whether they be defeats and discouragements and high aims brought to naught, under which one might be tempted to feel that further efforts are useless, "and stretching forward to the things which are before," —a profounder knowledge of God, a completer conformity to the will of God, more intimacy with God in Christ, and more consciousness of the indwelling of the Spirit, and more joy, and more assurance, "I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What energy of endeavor! How the eyes flash! How every muscle is strained! How the body leans forward! He is going to have that prize—or die!

Precisely this is the kind of determination which

every man must exemplify if he would realize in his own life worthy conceptions of Christian attainment and Christian character. He must put plan into the high business, and foresight and time into it, and will into it; and then he must concentrate all the forces of which he is master, and hold them concentrated, on the accomplishment of his end. Having once started in the race, a person is not to stop and dally and fritter away resources of action in long drawn discussions over the question whether "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" be a prize worth winning, but he is to keep right on and win it. There is no other way to win. To fall under the lead of exalted aspirations; to yield to the influence of beckoning visions; to try to become purer and larger and better, means struggle; and no man gets on without struggle.

This determination is essential to success. No man advances in knowledge and holiness who does not first of all wish to advance, and who does not then follow up the wish with the right measure of vigorous effort. In most of the exhortations to activity to be found in the New Testament the figures employed carry along with them the notion of difficulties and conflicts. "Strive to enter in"; "Fight the good fight"; "Labor"; "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure"; "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"; "We wrestle"; "See that no man take your crown." Here is a varied language but there is one idea running through it all;—we hold our own; we make progress; we enter into the secrets of the Lord; we become better assured in our hope, and stronger fibered in all our moral and spiritual qualities, only as we wage perpetual contests with evil influences, and hew our way to victory.

Not a few, it is evident, have made marked progress in realizing the best conceptions of the Christian life and character. They have felt their weakness and their unlikeness to Christ. They have had visions of the beauty and felt the power of a fellowship with God in which the human should be taken up and glorified in the divine. They have put forth their best efforts through means of study and self-examination and prayer and helpful services and sweet and patient endurance of suffering and gradual dying unto the world to apprehend that for which they were apprehended by the Son of God. They have succeeded to a gratifying degree. It is in the warmth of their hands. It is in the glow of their faces. It is in the quick sympathy of their hearts. It is in their unworldliness. It is in the spirit of helpfulness which they exhibit. It is in the increasing closeness of their walk with God. It is in their growing fitness for an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom. Precious souls are these. They are the salt of the earth, and if we saw and estimated as the angels see and estimate, we should add,—the glory of the earth, too.

Those who have reached this measure of perfectness, or maturity in their Christian development, are to keep right on, walking in the light which has already been shed on their paths, using the same means of growth in grace and knowledge which they have found profitable in the past, and resting in the assurance that if in any respect their judgment should be at fault and their calculations wrong, the Divine Teacher will come to their help, and furnish them needed guidance.

It is the privilege of us all to cherish these lofty conceptions of the Christian life, and to struggle day by

day toward their realization. Nothing else is there so worthy of the most exhausting and persistent endeavor. If we can only win this prize—the prize of "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,"—it matters little in what we may be defeated. In all the universe there is nothing like it. Men are struggling—crowding each other in their rivalries and competitions—with no other end in view than just to gain substances which perish with the using, and honors which vanish like the dew.

But the men and women who succeed in putting into character all which is implied in "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," come into a share in the resource of wealth and glory and joy which are at once measureless and imperishable.

Our Heavenly Citizenship.

"Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk even as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, *that it may be* conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself."—*Phil. 3: 17-21.*

XIV.

OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

The high point from which to examine this passage, and the point on which, better than any other perhaps, all the varied counsels and warnings and instructions and disclosures here laid before us can be concentrated and unified, is found in the clause: "For our citizenship is in heaven." Hence the theme for the morning is to be:—*Our Heavenly Citizenship.*

In tracing and developing this thought it is to be observed:

I. *In the first place that, according to the apostle's conception, and so presumably according to any right conception of the Christian life, our citizenship is already in heaven.*

This was a favorite view with Paul. He was fond of thinking of disciples in established relations with God, and here and now naturalized to privileges and rights which they are to enjoy only a little more fully by and by.

The world we now occupy is not heaven; but to a heavenly minded man it is heaven begun; and one may live in a manner to anticipate heavenly experiences. Along these hard and dusty thoroughfares of earth we cannot walk with God in the same open way in which saints in light walk with Him; but we can yet walk with God. Only in thought can we traverse the streets of what the apostle has called "the Jerusalem that is above," and enter into its delights, and dazzle our eyes

with its flaming splendors; but if we are in Christ our names are in the directory, and we are fellow-citizens not only with the saints who are here in the flesh but with the saints who are there. A thousand years of residence in the city which hath the foundations, and whose architect and maker is God, will not give us a more secure title to citizenship than we have to-day. The true disciple is a member of the household of God now, and he is a citizen of the city of God now. The renewing breath of the Divine Spirit which made him a new creature in Christ Jesus gave him a standing no man may question in the heavenly commonwealth. It matters not that we are still on this side the dividing line which separates the here from the hereafter, the visible from the invisible, we are nevertheless citizens of the city which is to be the everlasting habitation of the children of the Father. The heir is an heir even though he has not yet come into the inheritance of his property. The youth is a factor in the state, entitled to the immunities and subject to the obligations the state grants and imposes long before he can vote. A man does not have to die to obtain citizenship in the Celestial City. Renewal in Christ makes his citizenship an assured and present fact.

II. *Rightly estimated our heavenly citizenship may well become to us the occasion and ground of a peculiar joy.*

Perhaps it would be allowable to go further and say that our heavenly citizenship may well become to us the occasion and ground of a sanctified pride.

It is a poor specimen of a man who does not take any interest in the town or commonwealth of which he is a member. It is a poor specimen of a town or com-

monwealth which does not have excellency enough in it of some kind to awaken the enthusiasm of the intelligent and virtuous classes who may chance to be born within its boundaries. The two together—a good city and a good citizen—ought to go far to realize the ideal of life in social relations, and to fill all honest hearts with triumphant satisfaction.

The renowned cities of the ancient world were the boast of their people. Paul affirmed with evident elation that the Tarsus of which he was a citizen was no mean city. Athens was the glory of the land to which she has given an undying fame; and though there were rivalries and jealousies and conflicts between the towns of Greece, no intelligent and patriotic Greek ever failed to find food with which to feed his national pride in the culture and refinement and scholarly achievements of this celebrated city. In whatever part of the known earth he might be the Roman felt not only safer, but larger, in virtue of his ability to declare himself a citizen of the mighty metropolis which sat on seven hills and ruled the world. How passionate was the old Jew in his devotion to his beloved Jerusalem. It is the same in these modern times. Men announce in accents of peculiar gratification, and with an air which shows plainly their sense of the distinction derived from the fact, that they belong to Berlin or Paris or London or New York or Chicago or Philadelphia or Edinburgh or Boston. It sometimes seems to us to require a pretty severe attack of mental blindness, or an abnormal inflation of local pride, to enable the citizens of some cities, or at any rate the citizens of some cities in some stages of their careers, to become very enthusiastic in their admiration of their own towns. There are periods in the de-

velopment of all our cities, especially our American cities, when it would look as though a worthy and self-respecting man would just as soon hail from some other place as his own.

But there are no drawbacks to this city of which the apostle speaks, and in which all true followers of Jesus Christ are said to have their citizenship. One does not have to abate his enthusiasm, or modify his words of praise, on account of any mismanagement or corruption which prevails in the administration of its affairs. It is a perfect city, with perfect laws, and a perfect government. This is what the Psalmist thought of the city of his delight: "Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the side of the North, the city of the great King." But this was an earthly city, and in its beauty of situation, and in its appointments and joy, and in its opportunities and glories, was only faintly typical of the city which is across the river, and which the apostle saw with illuminated vision.

Poets and orators with a pardonable rhetorical license speak of the Rome which is yonder by the Tiber as the "Eternal City." There is but one Eternal City. That city is eternal because it is built on foundations over which neither time nor chance nor change can have any effect,—the foundation of the love of God in Christ. It is eternal because its walls have been quarried out of God's truth and laid up and cemented in the divine righteousness. It is eternal because all the movements of its life are under the orderings and impulses of holiness. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie." It is eternal because it perfectly fulfills the conditions of a perfect rational and moral existence. "God himself

shall be with them, and be their God; and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more."

Literally and in the highest sense which can attach to the word, this city in which the apostle says we have our citizenship is the City of God. In a way to distinguish His presence from His presence elsewhere God dwells in this Heavenly City. The angels who serve Him in multitudinous forms of glad service make their circuits from this vast metropolis of the spiritual universe. The spirits of men who have been justified by faith in the crucified Christ, and purified by the regenerating energy of the Divine Spirit gather here, and go in and out on their great and joyful errands, and realize to the full the blessedness of an unobstructed fellowship with their Lord, and with those who have been redeemed by His blood. Men die out of our earthly cities; and our earthly cities fall and fade from memory, but in this Heavenly City there is life forever.

In the form of a question our thought returns upon us, and with all confidence we ask: "May not our citizenship in this Heavenly City fitly become to us the occasion and ground of a peculiar joy—even a sanctified pride?" If a patriotic enthusiasm is commendable when a man is thinking of some Roman Empire to be defended and enlarged, or of some English commonwealth to be carved out of a Stuart tyranny, or of a magnificent republic to be erected on the foundation of a dozen oppressed colonies, why may not a man become exultant in the contemplation of a society in which his membership is already assured, and in whose light and liberty and purity and joy and boundless love he is one day to share up to the full measure of his capacity? How im-

perfect and how poor the privileges of all other cities in comparison to the city to which faith gives us citizenship.

III. *If we have anything like a suitable appreciation of our heavenly citizenship, we shall be careful to walk worthy of it, and to do our best to train our minds and hearts into the highest preparation for the exercise and enjoyment of its privileges.*

After what our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard, and the painful experiences through which we have passed here in our own land and under our own flag, in consequence of the ignorance and moral degradation of large numbers of those who have been invested with the lofty and sacred rights of citizenship, it should not be difficult to persuade an American audience, and particularly an American audience in one of our great cities, that there ought to be some feeling of its dignity and worth, and some proper education in its responsibilities and duties, before people anywhere are permitted to share in the privileges and functions of citizenship.

This is the thought the apostle carried along with him in his approach to the statement of the fact of our heavenly citizenship; and this heavenly citizenship, so exalted and sacred, he made a motive to careful and self-denying and pure living.

Paul begins this approach by an appeal to his own example, and a plea that these Philippian brethren would adjust their actions to the standard furnished in his own conduct. "Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them which so walk even as ye have us for an ensample."

Here by implication, as elsewhere by formal statement, the apostle means that this imitation of him shall

be according to the measure and spirit of his own imitation of Christ. "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ." Paul would have copied nobody else beyond this limit, and he would ask nobody else to copy him beyond this limit. Christ was his ideal of a perfect behavior and a perfect manhood. Conscious that he himself had come into complete surrender to Christ, and that he was sincere in his devotion to the end for which Christ died, and that in his words and deeds and entire life he was doing his best to exhibit the mind of Christ, and that he was walking in the utmost circumspection, he did not hesitate to say to men, who were inclined to break away from Christ on the side of self-indulgence, to look to him and do as he was doing. Not in a spirit of self-complacency and over-weening confidence,—for Paul was incapable of this,—but in a spirit which was at once profoundly honest and profoundly humble, the great apostle said: "Follow my methods, make them the ensample, or type, or pattern, of your Christian life."

It was wise counsel. We often come into the closest sympathy with the aims of Christ, and learn most effectually the lessons He has to teach, by studying Him in the conduct and character of some devoted and earnest follower. In the present instance the example of Paul would be especially pertinent and valuable. There were liabilities to serious divisions amongst these disciples. They were in danger of misconceiving Christ, and misinterpreting the law, and abusing liberty. Paul was accustomed to settle all questions of right and duty by referring them directly to Christ. It would save them many an annoyance, and hold them back from many a peril, to adopt this same course, and bring everything to the test of the mind of Christ. Paul and those asso-

ciated with him might well be studied and imitated by all who would keep close to Christ.

Paul pursues the discussion by adding: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

There are some who walk in such way that they can be followed and imitated with profit. Those who walk after this manner are to be marked, not that they may be shunned, but that they may be approved; for they walk after Christ and in fellowship with Christ. There are others, not some merely, but "many"—"for many walk," in a way to excite compassion and alarm; and the example of these must be studiously shunned. Paul has often lifted up his voice of warning against them, and he does it again, but it is with such pain and pity that the sad business brings tears to his eyes. "Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping."

Why is it? What is the occasion for this distress? It all lies in a single sentence: "They are the enemies of the cross of Christ." This is their "walk,"—they walk in opposition to the cross of Christ. The cross of Christ stands for an estimate of sin which makes it exceeding sinful. It stands for an energy of love and grace which makes it equal to the redemption of all mankind. It stands for unselfishness, for unworldliness, for the regeneration of the principles and motives by which men are controlled. In all these particulars the cross is an offense to them. They hate it. They are its enemies. They refuse to come under its sway. It may be that they accept the doctrine of the cross. It

may be they profess to follow the cross. But judged by their lives they must be accounted enemies of the cross.

What are their lives? How does it appear that they are out of harmony with any true conception of what the cross of Christ requires? Listen to Paul's startling arraignment. "Whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things."

This is the way "many walk"; and this is the evidence that "they are enemies of the cross of Christ." Their minds are absorded in the interests and pleasures of the present life. They do things in view of which they ought to feel humiliated, but instead they count these very acts or procedures their glory. They exalt their appetites into divinities, and make sensual enjoyment the object of their existence. The end of it all is perdition. They crawl and eat dust and daily partake of the serpent's curse. To be carnally minded is death.

But all this, so the apostle hastens to intimate, is out of keeping with any right conception of our heavenly citizenship. A man who realizes that he is only a pilgrim and stranger on the earth, and has here no abiding city, but that all his permanent interests and relationships are yonder in the skies, will not permit himself to come under bondage to the earth, and wander off into every sort of gross self-indulgence. He will remember what is expected of him as a citizen whose citizenship in heaven is already fixed. He will not fall into the materialism which reduces God to the sum total of the working forces of nature, and makes the soul a mere matter of delicate physical organization, but he will keep the personality of the Father and the spirituality of our

natures realities ever fresh and living to the mind. He will keep earthly things under and divine things uppermost in his thought.

In his immortal dream Bunyan tells us of one who would look no way but downward, and who stood with a muck-rake in his hand, while over him and looking benignantly upon him there was one who held a celestial crown that he was ready to exchange for the muck-rake; but the poor deluded victim of the over-absorbing earthliness refused to lift his eye, or regard the crown. Instead he kept on raking to himself the straws and small sticks and dust of the floor. One who walks in the realization of a heavenly citizenship will look up rather than down, and he will think more of the crown than of the muck-rake, and he will be loyal to the noblest ideals of a Christian life.

He will not convert his belly into a god, and expose himself to classification with those whom Ruskin says God made to be kings over creation, but who choose rather to drop down and live as swine.

The story is told of a gentleman in England who had a chapel attached to his home. One day he was visited by an acquaintance from London. He showed him over the premises and finally took him into the chapel. The first exclamation of the visitor was: "What a glorious kitchen this would make." His thoughts were on roast beef and mutton and ale. But the answer to the visitor was prompt and worthy: "When I make a god of my belly, then I will make a kitchen of my chapel." He was not prepared then and there to ignore the divine image in which he had been created and plunge over into animalism. The Sicilians erected an altar to the goddess of gluttony. Men with heavenly citizen-

ships keep the body under. They do not glory in their shame, nor make the things of which they ought to be ashamed an occasion of glory. They live up in the realms of their higher natures, where they can interchange thought with God, and realize somewhat of the fellowship which is to be realized in full where the seeing is no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face.

IV. *This heavenly citizenship justifies us in indulging extraordinary expectations for the future of our existence.*

Availing ourselves of all the aid there is in the Holy Spirit we are to do our best by a godly walk, by self-denials, by consecrated services, by meditation, by prayer, by struggling after holiness, and by continual advances in likeness to Christ, to fit our souls for the exalted state of the life to come. But there is a preparation beyond our skill and power, and in which there can be little co-operation on our part. It is the preparation of the body for the activities and joys of a condition which is purely spiritual. This preparation, however, toward which we can do little or nothing in our own skill and power, is to be wrought for us by the divine might of the risen and ascended Lord. Christ is to do it.

"From whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory according to the working whereby He is able to subject all things unto Himself."

A change—a transformation—is to be accomplished by which the soul is to have an organ through which to work, as well as a sphere in which to work, perfectly suited to its highest capacities and ends. We are to

have bodies like our Savior's glorified body. They are to be spiritual like His. They are to be holy like His. They are to be immortal like His. When the Savior comes for whom we wait He will transfigure the body of our humiliation into the form of His own body of glory. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body there is also a spiritual body." These spiritual bodies are what our souls are to occupy and use. They will be the organs through which the personality and individuality of souls will be expressed.

All this seems well-nigh impossible to us. But it is not impossible. It is not impossible to Him who was Master over the grave, and who while yet on earth could cloth Himself with a body of glory, and who has the measureless ability to subdue all things unto Himself. All resources of skill and energy are His; and He will use them to make good to His disciples their hopes.

What a prospect does this hold out to believers. What expectations they are justified in cherishing. With what fitness may the heart of a disciple of Jesus Christ leap and glow in anticipation of what awaits him in the Celestial City in which He already has his citizenship. Whatever else we may gain, or not gain, whatever may be our experience here in this world, if we are in Christ this is assured to us. Our citizenship in heaven is a possession and a hope of which nobody can deprive us.

Not with mortal eyes shall we ever behold the city in which we have our heavenly citizenship. But day by day we are drawing nearer to it. Every pulse-beat

brings us so much closer to its open gates and its jaspar walls and its golden streets and its flaming towers and minarets and its atmosphere of ineffable glory and its fulness of radiant life. In due time and at the right time, and without fail, it will all break upon us; and as the vision becomes dim to scenes on this side the Valley of the Shadow, the clarified soul will have open and anointed vision of the inconceivable splendors which lie beyond. In the glad surprises and revelations of the first quick glance of the first moment of experience in the city toward which our faces are set there will be infinite compensation for all the disappointments and trials and sharp bitter pains we may have known on earth.

To not a few, worn and weary with the burdens of life, the day will be a joyous one which realeases them from the confinement and bondage of this present sphere, and gives them the full range and assured happiness of the Jerusalem that is above.

Parkman tells us that more than sixty years before the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock the French Huguenots, under the direction and influence of Coligny, attempted to establish a colony on the coast of Brazil. Several ship-loads of emigrants were sent out, and the work went on bravely for a while, and the project was full of promise. But the men in charge of the enterprise betrayed it; and the poor colonists,—or such of them as were spared to live,—had to get back to their native land as best they could. Amongst them were several ministers who had gone out from Geneva. These were treated by their heartless and time-serving betrayers with special severity. The only way in which they could effect their return was to wait on an island,

exposed to starvation, and butchery by the savages, until a vessel loading in the harbor should be ready to take them aboard. At length they embarked. Their vessel was a crazy hulk, and drifted only slowly on her way. "Storms fell upon them, their provisions failed, their water casks were empty, and, tossing in the wilderness of waves, or rocking on the long swells of subsiding gales, they sank almost to despair. In their famine they chewed the Brazil wood with which the vessel was laden, devoured every scrap of leather, singed and ate the horn of lanterns," and hunted and fed on every loathsome form of life the ship contained. "At length, stretched on the deck, sick, listless, attenuated, and scarcely able to move a limb, they descried across the waste of sea the faint, cloudlike line that marked the coast of Brittany." It was the solid earth. It was the home-land. It was their beloved France. It is not difficult to conceive how the light of a new hope flashed into the dim and weary eyes of the returning colonists, and how the throbbings of a fresh life went bounding through all the veins and arteries of their bodies, and how strength, as to a young giant just awakening from refreshing sleep, came to their nerveless limbs.

In some such way as this shall we be thrilled and exalted in all the pulses of the soul when we behold the first faint outlines of the shining shore, and the quenchless light of the Celestial City greets our eager gaze. For that is our home-land. That is where our inheritance lies, and our destiny. That is the city where we have our citizenship, and within whose walls we are to move back and forth in the presence of the Lord forever.

Standing Fast in the Lord.

"Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved.—*Phil. 4: 1.*

XV.

STANDING FAST IN THE LORD.

In this paragraph of the delightful epistle whose instructions we are tracing together, and whose spirit we are trying to catch, it falls in our way to consider: *Standing Fast in the Lord.*

One of the first things to strike us in taking up the subject in the connection in which it is here found, is the affectionate earnestness with which the apostle presses it on the attention of those to whom he writes. In all Paul's letters the tender fervor of this appeal has no exact parallel. He is like a mother who softens her counsel to a cherished boy by a storm of kisses. Warm like a mother, like a mother also he is sincere; and he puts a wealth of deepest love into every word he utters.

There are not less than six terms of endearment associated with the injunction here voiced to "stand fast in the Lord."

1. "*Brethren.*" "My brethren." Not his "brethren" according to the flesh; but his "brethren" in Christ. His "brethren" in that they all have their membership in one body, and are under the direction of one Spirit, and are called in one hope, and rejoice in a common acknowledgment of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Father. They are his "brethren" in the sacred bond of a love which springs fresh and full from the heart of Jesus.

2. "*Beloved.*" "My brethren beloved." This lends

emphasis to the intensity of affection naturally involved in the idea of brotherhood.

3. "*Longed for.*" "My brethren beloved and longed for." Only here in all the New Testament does this adjective occur. But the word in its verb-form has already been used twice in this letter,—once back in the first chapter: "For God is my witness, how I *long after* you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus"; and once in the second chapter where it is said of Epaphroditus that he "longed after" them all. These Philippian brethren, while brethren, were yet Paul's own spiritual children. His heart went out to them; and he yearned with an eager and well-nigh consuming desire to take them by the hand, and look into their faces, and commune with them in the sweetness and sacredness of their mutual fellowship in Christ. In the limitation and loneliness of his imprisonment, Paul, no doubt, felt this longing more keenly than he might in other circumstances.

4. "*My joy.*" "My brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy." Paul employed the same expression years before in writing to the Thessalonians. "For what is our hope, *or joy,* or crown of glorying? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus at His coming? For ye are our glory *and our joy.*" Believers who were faithful to the faith; disciples who were true to their discipleship; followers of our Lord who really followed, were always precious in the estimation of the apostle, and his satisfaction in them was boundless. His soul leaped within him, and his pen caught a trick of enthusiasm whenever he thought of those dear ones in yonder Macedonian city. He was glad for Christ's sake; for they had been won to Christ. He was glad for their sakes; for they were now

safe, and on their way to an everlasting blessedness. He was glad for his own sake; for these redeemed ones would be a joy to him forever.

5. "*Crown.*" "My joy and crown." This word "crown" may carry with it either of two ideas. It may mean sovereignty, or it may mean triumph. We can think of it as a diadem worn by a king, or as a wreath which has been placed on the brow of a victor. It is in the latter significance that "crown" is used here. Those who had found life in Christ through his teaching or influence were to be the wreath of victory Paul was to put on and wear. Every soul won from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from death to life, is a radiant ornament and an imperishable honor to the person who does it. These Christians at Philippi were to be an endless ornament and honor to the apostle.

6. "*My Beloved.*" These are the closing words of the sentence. Paul catches up the thought of what these brethren were to him, and lingers on it, as if it were much easier for him to tell them of his love than to exhort them to duty. "My beloved."

Having thus, with a little special care examined the setting which the apostle has given to his precept, the way is open for turning more directly to the subject in hand, and asking after some of the considerations which may be expected to have weight in constraining us to stand fast in the Lord.

I. *First, then, in the way of motive to this standing fast in the Lord, there may be mentioned the high thoughts of heavenly citizenship with all that is involved in it, on which the apostle has just been dwelling.*

Herein lies the significance of the "wherefore."

"*Wherefore*, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord." Here is the thing to be done, but the ground of it lies back in something else.

It was a characteristic of Paul to make the largest and most sacred truths he ever treated yield immediate practical inferences. When he had paid the matchless tribute we find in the closing paragraph of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans to the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, and to the unsearchableness of His ways, and to the presence in all things of His creative and sustaining energy, he leaped at once to the conclusion that what this, along with what had gone before it, signified was complete consecration. "I beseech you, *therefore*, . . . to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." When he had finished his glorious discussion of immortality and the resurrection which is preserved for us, in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, he hurried to say the lesson of it all is work,—or rather, first of all the lesson of it is steadfastness, just as in the present instance, and then it is one of work. "Wherefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." No matter how lofty the theme considered, nor how apparently remote from daily struggles and interests, Paul is very sure to get from it some pratical inference touching submission, or patience, or courage, or fidelity to duty, or aggressiveness in Christian activity. He is very sure to make it mean more love, more trust, more faith, more joy, more sacrifice, more of the mind of Christ.

So here the apostle makes the vision and the hope of

future glory, when these bodies of our humiliation shall have been fashioned anew, and conformed to the body of the glory of our risen Lord, and when the privileges of our heavenly citizenship shall have been fully realized in heaven, a moral and uplifting force to hold the believer to his duty. This was the sublime expectation into which their faith in Christ had brought them; and they must abide in it. This was the priceless inheritance into whose heirship they had come when they yielded and accepted salvation through the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross; and they must not forfeit their heirship by any instability of purpose or action. It was as if Paul had said to these brethren: "By all the promises which have been made to you concerning the life to come; by all the thoughts you cherish of unutterable experiences in the light and purity and peace and joy of the world invisable; by all the wealth of disclosure which you anticipate when you have put off the mortal and have put on the immortal, and are permitted to go in and out forevermore in the presence of God, do not waver, but stand fast,—stand fast in the Lord."

This is a motive for standing fast in the Lord which, in my apprehension, is too little appreciated and pressed. Under the exceptional stress which is just now being laid on the present life and its interests, we are under no small danger of underestimating the value of the life to come and the influence it ought to have on our conduct. One of the special perils associated with the passionate thinking which is now going on with respect to certain phases of truth and its applications in the religious world, and the snap-shot conclusions men are reaching on these subjects, lies in belittling heaven and the hope of heaven in the popular estimation. In the

application of Christianity to society, under which its exponents are pleased to call the new or sociological views of the Kingdom, remarks are made and attitudes are assumed, which even though not so intended, seem to imply very small respect—not to say contempt—for those incentives to righteousness which have their source in the world to come. As if it were not possible for these men to carry two ideas in their heads at once, they practically insist on placing all emphasis on this life and leaving the life which is to be lived beyond these earthly horizons to shift for itself.

But this is to ignore an open and persistent teaching of the New Testament. In the gospels and in the epistles alike both worlds are kept in view. In any true conception of facts, the man who is best fitted to meet the duties and responsibilities of life here and now is best fitted to meet the Lord face to face in the great hereafter. So the man who is best fitted for translation into the joy and glory of the invisible realm is best fitted for witnessing for Christ and helping our humanity while yet under these earthly limitations. The two ideas go together. The Scriptures never commit the folly of attempting to separate them, or to lay stress on one at the expense of the other.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told men in what temper they must walk if they would fulfil the law and be the true children of the Father. But in telling them this He did not hesitate to direct their attention to the heavenly recompense they would be sure to receive if they were faithful. It did not seem to Jesus to be lowering the standard of action to present and press such a consideration; nor did it seem to Him to be beneath the

dignity of men to be influenced by such a consideration. "For great is your reward in heaven."

Paul was filled with gratitude to God in behalf of the Colossian disciples because of the hope which was *laid up for them in the heavens.* They had a motive in their Christian life which he did not hesitate to locate beyond the grave.

This same apostle had an intense longing to depart and be with Christ,—to be with Christ, that is, in some closer and more intimate sense than is possible to one who is still in the flesh, which he thought was far better; and his soul seemed to be always in a glow of enthusiastic anticipation in view of the disclosures to be made to him, and the happiness to be realized when he should see no longer in a mirror darkly, but face to face, and know no longer in part, but even as also he had been known.

Peter speaks of an inheritance, to which men have a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, *reserved in heaven* for those who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last times.

It is not difficult to conceive the greeting one would have met had he ventured to suggest to the Great Teacher and the inspired apostles that they make no reference to the life beyond the grave in their efforts to get human souls, blind and sinful and earth-bound, into right relations with God. A man who has faith in the Son of God may be never so earnest and whole-souled and glad in his Christian services here in this world, yet it will be well-nigh out of the question for him and

ought to be out of the question altogether, not to think, and to think at times with intense longing, of the crown of righteousness which is laid up for him, and which he is to receive when the good fight has been fought out and his earthly course has been finished. As a matter of fact this uplift of the eyes to heaven, and the feeling that heaven could not be far away, has been one of the supports of toilers in the midst of their unappreciated toils, and of martyrs in prison and at the stake. It is not well to try to be finer and loftier than the Scriptures. Motives which holy souls in all the ages have felt and employed we may not disdain.

Besides man was created for an endless destiny. Within him there throbs the pulse of an immortal being. Heaven is man's true home. Dying to the Christian is only a home-going. We are on this side of the Valley of the Shadow only for a moment. We are on the other side for the measureless periods of all the future. It is as natural and fit for the children of the Heavenly Father and the heirs of heaven to think about heaven and talk about it, as for sojourners in a foreign land to think and talk about their own country. Men abroad are often homesick, and in their loneliness they have resort to the thought of what awaits them at the hearthstone when their sight-seeing is over, or the duties which have detained them are discharged. It is only by overcoming a sense of one's heavenly destiny that one can escape thoughts of heaven.

It is, therefore, a right thing to direct the worn and weary to find comfort in the assurance that a rest remaineth unto the people of God. It is a right thing to urge the bitterly afflicted to remember that in a certain

sense even the severest affliction is light, and is only for a moment; and that it works for them more and more exceedingly an eternal weight and glory. It is a right thing to press and persuade souls, if possible, to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God; and to set their minds on the things that are above, in preference to setting them on things that are upon the earth.

As it is a right thing to direct and urge and press men and women to do these things; so it is a right thing for men and women to make much of heaven in their thoughts and longings and aspirations; and to find strength and satisfaction in the hope which is as an anchor of the soul. Like Jesus the disciples of Jesus may endure their crosses in the thought of the joy that is set before them.

II. *In the second place it is only by standing fast in the Lord, that a believer can show proper gratitude for his salvation and meet his responsibilities and do his work and realize in character and destiny the high end for which he has been led to believe.*

1. The man who sincerely accepts Christ for his Savior, whether he does it in the silence and privacy of his own soul, or in an open and bold confession before the world, owes it to Christ to hold to Him unto the end. No service was ever rendered to a human soul like that which was rendered by the Incarnate Son of God on the cross of Calvary. One who has ever had any sense or appreciation of this service in his own heart is bound by obligations the strongest conceivable to make this sense of appreciation evident by a life steady and straightforward in its fidelity. Christ is not an unstable Savior, here to-day and there to-morrow. Christ is not a

Savior of moods, approachable and tender at one time, and inaccessible and stern at another time. He is a steadfast Savior. He is a Savior who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. One who loves Him and trusts Him always knows where to find Him. The disciple ought to be like his Master,—steadfast, true and loyal in his discipleship. It is a harm to his own soul, and it works wide-spread mischief, for a man who has ever known anything of the pardoning grace of Jesus, and more especially if he has ever had recognition among the followers of Jesus, to be up and down in his religion, and capricious in his services. Such conduct is a pronounced and flagrant dishonor to our ascended Lord. How it must pain the heart of Jesus to see one of His disciples, fickle, wavering, inconstant, in his Christian life.

2. Besides unless one stands fast in the Lord, firm, faithful and resolute in his devotion, he will do nothing, or next to nothing, to spread abroad a knowledge of the Lord, and to build up His Kingdom in the world.

This is true in all spheres, that there must be an aim and steadiness to an aim in order to any worthy achievement. In business, in politics, in literature, in science, in art, in working out reforms, the man who does not know his own mind, or who, knowing what he wants, does not hold to it with a fixed and determined purpose, will bring nothing to pass. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not have the excellency."

True everywhere else, it is eminently true in the realm of work for the salvation of men and the promotion of righteousness, that it is only by choosing objects and making plans and holding steadily on, that good is accomplished. If these brethren at Philippi were to en-

large their fellowship; if they were to carry the love of Christ into hearts and homes and circles where this love had never been known before; if they were to reach out into the surrounding regions of Macedonia, and make other cities and communities glad with the same gladness with which their own souls had been filled, they must be as fixed in their faith as stars in their courses, and hold to their intent of loyalty to Christ and fidelity in His service, with the uniformity and grip of the law of gravitation. The Christian man who is "hurrah-boys" in the morning, and is down in the dumps in the evening; who is in his place in the church on Sunday, or with his class at the Sunday-school, or at the prayer-meeting, or at his mission work, when he feels like it, and is not there when he does not feel like it; or who is loud-mouthed and resolute for high standards of living till principle costs something, and then is ready to abate his pretensions and drop down into compromise with the world, is just simply no good. He is an impediment to the progress of the Kingdom. He is a reproach to faith. He is a burden for the Church to carry. To all such persons the Church owes a duty. It owes the duty of forbearance, of patient and helpful dealing, and of sympathy. But so far as strength is concerned, and moral force in a community, and anything like effectiveness in aggressive enterprises for Christ, the Church would be mightier by far than it now is, or can be, were all these vacilating ones swept from the rolls at once. It is the men who stand fast in the Lord,—who stand fast from year to year, who stand fast in storms as well as sunshine, who stand fast when others waver and yield and give up, who count and set Christianity forward.

3. Standing fast, moreover,—standing fast in the Lord, is the condition which must be observed if one would come to anything in the way of Christian attainment and character and be secure in his expectation of a life of blessedness in the presence of Christ and in the fellowship of redeemed and sanctified souls beyond the grave.

This, doubtless, was the main thought in the mind of the apostle when he penned this counsel to his "brethren beloved,"—their own good. He wanted to be certain they were not losing out of their own souls the peace and joy and hope they had found in believing in Christ, and that they were not taking any attitudes or courses which would operate against their spiritual development, or put their future in jeopardy. Their souls were precious to him, and he wished to hear of their growth, and to be sure of meeting them in heaven.

It is impressive to note how frequent in the New Testament is the exhortation to firmness in one's Christian position.

In Paul's letters alone the phrase "stand fast" is found six times. He urges the Corinthians to "*stand fast*" in the faith. He urges the Galatians to "*stand fast*" in liberty. In his second Epistle to the Thessalonians he urges these brethren to "*stand fast*" in the great traditions, or truths, in which they had been taught. In the first chapter of this Epistle to the Philippians he pleads that those to whom he writes may "*stand fast*" in the unity of the Spirit and of the faith of the Gospel. In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, as here again in this Epistle to the Philippians, his strenuous word is "*stand fast*" in the Lord. "*Stand fast*" in the faith; "*stand fast*" in liberty; "*stand fast*"

in fellowship and in activity; "*stand fast*" in the light and joy and power of the truth; "*stand fast*" in the Lord,—these are the ringing watchwords which the apostle sounds in the ears of believers. For their own spiritual comfort and growth, as well as for the glory of their Lord and efficiency in His service, they are not to be miserable deserters from the ranks of the army which is lead by the Captain of our salvation; nor indifferent spectators to the terrific struggle which is going on in the world between light and darkness and good and evil; nor triflers in the midst of these awful tragedies of life in which souls are swept out by the undertow of worldliness and vice and lost in the fathomless depths; but firm-footed, unyielding, aggressive,—never changing position except to move forward into new and higher knowledge, into new and firmer faith, and into a new and closer identification with Jesus Christ.

To the same effect are many other teachings and injunctions in the New Testament. Above all it is not to be forgotten that it was Jesus who said: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." If a man will not stand fast; if he will not hold on and hold out; if he will not continue patiently in his well-doing; if he will not inform his soul with a resolute determination to be steadfast, and to go straight ahead without turning to the right or left till these earthly pulses cease their beating, he can have no assurance of an entrance, and least of all assurance of an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom. To begin is much; but it is vastly more to keep on. To begin is much; but it amounts to nothing unless the beginning is followed up. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

The temptations to instability in these times of ours

are varied and subtle. There has never been an age in which there were not skeptical tendencies. The conflict between the material and the spiritual is not a new one, but an old one—as old as man. But the form of the conflict, and so the form of the danger, changes from period to period, and from land to land.

We are confronted just now with two perils.

We are confronted with the perpetual and universal peril which grows out of the ambitions and rivalries of life, whereby personal religion is neglected, and the ideals of character are lowered. All feel this.

We are confronted, too, under current investigations into the Scriptures, and the impulse given in the last quarter of a century to the study of comparative religions with the peril of thinking that after all one form of faith and worship may be about as good as another.

But against all these undermining and disintegrating influences, and face to face with every assault which is made on the reasonableness of our trust in God, we are to stand fast and endure unto the end. Paul knew whom he believed; and he knew with an increasing confidence, that in accepting Christ, and building all his hopes of forgiveness and of everlasting blessedness on Christ, he was linking his interests to a life which is eternal. Men through all the centuries since He was here, have been making their attacks on Jesus. They have written Him down; they have courteously bowed Him out; they have smitten Him with an overwhelming ridicule—so they have fancied; but there He stands in spite of it all, patient, compassionate, serene, abiding, the light of the world, and the life of the world, and the hope of glory.

How, now, may men "stand fast" in the large and secure way the apostle contemplates?

Precisely in the way the apostle suggests. It is to be "in the Lord." "Stand fast *in the Lord*." There is no assured standing for anybody *out of the Lord*. There is no overcoming and defeating anybody who is *in the Lord*. His hand holds and upholds. His arms were once outstretched on the cross; but they have in them the sinews of the Almighty, and when they embrace us it is with a strength which no satanic agency can break. Just as long as we are "*in the Lord*,"—in Him without any reluctance or wavering, we shall have the quick insight to distinguish between the right and the wrong, the moral force to repel evil and hew our way through all entanglements, and the faith and courage to press right forward till our hands lay hold on the prize and our heads are garlanded with victory.

It is these stand-fast characters who come to be very beautiful to look upon, and very useful in society. The men who are up and down, off the hooks and out of sorts, under every little provocation, may have special gifts; genius even, and many good qualities; but they are uncomfortable associates in any sort of business or undertaking, and they are not likely to make any very marked or abiding impression by their lives. But men who are steadfast in their faith and in their fidelity to truth and duty, and whose opinions and principles and motives of action and purposes to-day are very sure to be their opinions and principles and motives of action and purposes to-morrow, even though their pasts are not brilliant, and their lives are not lived in the public eye, will score a record of general respect and of

usefulness which any honest person might covet, and best of all, will be sure to win the "Well done" of our Lord at last.

Christianity and Woman.

"I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.—*Phil. 4: 2-3.*

XVI.

CHRISTIANITY AND WOMAN.

The subject matter of this passage is such that it may very naturally be made the basis for discussing the question of *Christianity and Woman*,—or the services which have been rendered by Christianity to woman and by woman to Christianity.

It is perhaps not quite fortunate nor fair, that the benefits woman has received from Christianity and the services she has rendered to Christianity in return, and which have been so conspicuous on both sides, should be introduced for consideration over against the background of a woman's quarrel. For this is what we have here—a serious misunderstanding and disagreement between two women who have been forward in their Christian activity. It would not seem to be a promising outlook.

But the fact loses much of its untoward significance when it is remembered that men as well as women, and, on a general average through the apostolic period and after centuries, men much oftener than women, have needed to be exhorted to put away strife, and become mutually reconciled, and show toward each other the spirit of forbearance and brotherly love. It is not because men are men, nor because women are women, that such fatal facility is exhibited for falling into moods of alienation and difference; but for the reason that there is such a vast amount of explosive material lodged in

our human nature. This, and this alone, explains why good people,--people otherwise intelligent and consecrated, so frequently fly asunder.

Be this as it may, however, Euodia and Syntyche were at odds. They had been friends, and had attached themselves to the apostle, and awakened his grateful regard, by their labors with him in the Gospel, and he wanted them to be friends again. Not the slightest intimation is given touching the ground of the trouble; nor is it possible from the language to infer which one Paul thought the more to blame. He was too wise for this. He put them both together, and toward both he used exactly the same form of entreaty. "I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche." The end to which he exhorted them was that they might "be of the same mind in the Lord." Only in the Lord could they hope to be at one; for quite likely their temperaments differed, and their views of the work to be done, and the best way of doing it; but when they thought of the Lord, and what He wanted them to be, it would be difficult for them not to be at one.

Paul was the more earnest in this, because he knew how much harm would come to the common cause were two of the leading women workers of the Church to fall into antagonism and refuse to co-operate. It would be only a little while before there would be rival parties, and mutually jealous factions, and criminating and re-criminating whisperings, and open, and possibly irreconcilable, enmities. There would be Euodia and her followers, and Syntyche and her followers; and the strength and enthusiasm of the Church would go into miserable bickerings, instead of united and vigorous work for Christ. The end, probably, would be a divided fellow-

ship, and much scandal, and mischief without measure.

Nor did the apostle think it enough to express his own earnest and loving solicitude for a thorough making-up between these two noteworthy women; but he sought to have others join him in the same commendable endeavor. "Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women." Who this "true" or "genuine yokefellow" was is only a matter of conjecture. Ramsey, as we know, thinks it was Luke. Dr. Lightfoot, in his admirable commentary on Philippians, thinks it likely Epaphroditus, who was to bear this letter into Macedonia, is the person intended. With all deference to a scholar so able and eminent it seems to me this cannot be the right guess. Paul knew how to express a thing like this with clearness and accuracy. If he had meant to designate the bearer of the letter in the words: "Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow," as if the expression were an aside whisper injected into the epistle, he would not have put it in this way; but he would have said: "I have asked him or I shall ask him, who is to carry this message from me to you, to do the best he can in the same direction." Meyer's contention looks more reasonable when he insists that the word here translated — "yokefellow" is a proper name — Syzygus, - and that this name was borne by one who had been in close association with Paul in his work, that he was at Philippi when the letter was written, and was well known in the city as deserving the high praise bestowed upon him as "genuine." Beyond suppositions of this sort we cannot go.

We simply do not know who the man was. We know only, as has already been said, that it was somebody to whom the apostle was very much attached, and in whose

tact and grace he had large confidence, and with whom he had gone in and out in his labors in the Lord in a delightfully intimate companionship.

He wanted this man, and he wanted Clement,—for this appears to be the more probable connection of the words—"with Clement also"—and others of the cherished group whose names, though he does not mention them, are recorded on high,—"and the rest of my fellow-workers whose names are in the book of life," to co-operate in securing the same blessed result. He wanted peace and harmony in the Church; for he knew that only through peace and harmony could the Church be efficient, and exercise an influence in the community which would be for the saving and edifying of souls, and the renovating of life in all its forms and relations. To be successful in his object Paul aimed to enlist the sympathies and efforts of those identified with the Church, and who were personally concerned with its good name and usefulness. Only as they helped could he hope for the re-establishment of love and unity.

But the point of special significance in this section of Scripture is the recognition given to women, and the warm commendation their services receive. "Help these women, for they labored with me in the Gospel." They were workers in the Church. They aided in communicating the truth. They were active agents in the establishment of Christianity in the city. Two of the leaders in this band of women had fallen into a misunderstanding, and needed a word of timely counsel, and the wise and tender intervention of friends; but they had made a record for themselves of activity and efficiency. They had entered into sympathy with the mission on which the apostle had come among them, and

they had lent their energies of heart and hand to the blessed business of acquainting souls with Christ, and winning them into His faith and life.

The priceless service Christianity has rendered to woman has come to be one of the familiar thoughts of the time. Whatever honor and influence woman had under the old dispensation, or whatever place and power were assigned her in any of the civilizations which lay outside the Old and New Testament economies, or whatever distinction and eminence individual women may have achieved in any of the nations whose history has come down to us, it is certain the system of truth and duty given to the world by Jesus of Nazareth laid the foundations broad and deep on which woman was to build the superstructure of a free, large, wholesome life. Christianity emancipated woman, and set her on the way to realizing her highest possibilities. All the proof of this which is necessary is to institute parallels between the condition of women in Christian lands and in other lands.

It was here at Philippi, amongst the people who were drawn to the faith of Christ by the ministry of Paul, that the transition for women from the new to the old order of things received its first and most signal illustration. It has been conjectured by some of the writers that the women of Macedonia held a higher position and exercised a more potent influence, if not in all spheres, yet in the sphere of religion, than was usual in the Greek world. The remains of ancient inscriptions are cited in support of this view. If this is true it goes to show what an advantage the apostle had in the customs and public opinion of the country in carrying to them a Gospel whose fundamental principle is that

under it there can be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. Race prejudice, sex prejudice, and the prejudice of nationality and social condition and power were all overridden in the outcome of the apostle's preaching in this Macedonian city.

Of the three typical conversions at Philippi, one, Lydia, was an Asiatic; another, the soothsaying maid, was a Greek; and the third, the jailor, was a Roman. It was a cosmopolitan representation. The universality of the truth as it is in Jesus, and its suitableness to all classes and conditions and tribes of people found a striking exemplification in the variety of individuals who were led into the one common faith of the Son of God, by these opening missionary labors in Europe. It was prophetic of what was to take place on a larger scale in the coming centuries. Asiatic conservatism, Greek culture, Roman power, were to yield to the attractions of the cross.

But the first one to accept Christ, and to yield her life up to the constraining love of Christ was a woman. It is a brief but wonderfully beautiful story. "And on the Sabbath we went forth without the gate by the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke unto the women which were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, to give heed unto the things that were spoken by Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying: If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." That was the beginning of a

movement for the amelioration of woman whose force is not yet spent.

The second one, of the typical class, to accept Christ and find the renewal of life and outlook in Him, was a slave. This story, too, is a brief one, but it is strangely pathetic, and brimming with hope for all who are in distress, either inward or outward or both. "As we were going to the house of prayer, a certain maid, having a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. The same following after Paul and us cried out, saying: These men are servants of the Most High God, which proclaim unto you the way of salvation. And this she did for many days. But Paul, being sore troubled, turned and said to the spirit: I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very hour." She was freed from her inward bondage, and this opened the way for freedom from outward bondage. From that day to this Christianity has worked for the liberation of all slaves, and the endowing of all human beings everywhere with the sacred right of self-ownership.

It is to be observed, however, that the slave who was delivered from the evil possession which made her a piece of valuable property to her evil masters, was also a woman. Slavery was never so hard on man as it was on woman. Slavery was never so degrading to man as it was to woman. Here, combined in a single instance, was the woman who was to be set forward and made the bright particular ornament of the home and the fairest product of a ripened Christian civilization, and the slave whose shackles were to be struck from her limbs, and whose rights and privileges were to be enlarged until

kings and aristocracies must bow in acknowledgment of them.

Had one possessed of the prescient ability to discover effects in causes, and to see the end from the beginning, been standing there and looking on, when Lydia and the soothsaying maid came under the power of Christ, he might have said: "This means the instruction and elevation of woman, till, as in the picture of Paradise, she stands once more side by side with him, and on the basis of a perfect equality with man; and it means the instruction and elevation of the over-weighted and oppressed, till, in the sight of the law as in the sight of God, one man is as good as another man, with a prerogative just as unquestioned to make the most of his faculties and opportunities." For this is what was to follow in due time. It is a question with me whether there was ever another conversion in the history of our Christianity, which was at once so typical and prophetic as this of the woman-slave of Philippi.

There were women of high grade in the Oriental nations; and their names flash out now and then on pages of history which are otherwise dark with records of cruelty and degradation and disdain. The self-respect and dignity and true womanliness of Queen Vashti, which she wore like a necklace of radiant jewels, would be an ornament to female character in any age or among any people. But while particular women were so much, woman was nothing in the Oriental nations.

There were women in Greece,—specimens the most splendid in intellectual abilities and training, and the names of some of these women will never perish from literature. It is a peculiar fact, however, and one to which Lecky, in his "History of European Morals,"

calls special attention, that in the legendary or poetical period which Homer represented, and whose spirit was carried over into the writings of the later tragedians, woman occupied a much higher position than in the later historical period. In proof of the high ideals of womanhood which were cherished, and of the esteem in which women were held in the dim ages before history began, Lecky cites, along with other examples: "The conjugal tenderness of Hector and Andromache; the unwearied fidelity of Penelope, awaiting through the long revolving years the return of her storm-tossed husband, who looked forward to her as the crown of all his labors; the heroic love of Alcestis, voluntarily dying that her husband might live; . . . the joyous, modest, and loving Nausicaa, whose figure shines like a perfect idyll among the tragedies of the Odyssey." In proof of what woman actually was, when she had emerged from the dimness of the unhistoric ages, and had come up where the search-light of a trustworthy investigation could be turned upon her, and of the place she held in the common regard of society, he turns to the records which have come down to us from that wonderful center and source of culture, the old Greek world. Notwithstanding the remarkable instances of sweetness and fidelity and moral excellence in woman to be found in the Greek poetry, yet in their traditions, in their laws, in their customs, and in the whole economy of their life, woman was accorded an inferior standing. If she was a virtuous wife she was kept in seclusion, and had little companionship except with her slaves. Only by living a life of license could she enjoy the benefits of freedom and education. Women were much, but woman was little; and her place was a low one in the social scale. Nothing

would have astonished Socrates and Plato more than to see women sustaining such relations to their husbands, and in association with their husbands, to the world, as Mrs. Browning, or Mrs. Gladstone, or Mrs. Gulick in Spain, or Mrs. Riggs among the Indians, or Mrs. Goodell in the discharge of pastoral duties, or the wife of the Earl of Aberdeen.

The reader of Roman history comes upon some illustrious names of women. In some respects the condition of woman in the City of the Seven Hills was in advance of her condition at Athens. The law treated her better. The doors of social life were wider open to her entrance. She had more liberty. At the same time the women of Rome were exceedingly corrupt; and their corruption was due largely to the contempt in which they were held by men. The corruption increased till the empire fell. There were women who were in the highest degree reputable and distinguished, but woman counted for little in the common estimate of public opinion.

In his "*Gesta Christi,*" Charles Loring Brace well says: "The current opinion in the cultivated classes of the Roman Empire, if we may judge from poets, satirists, and fragments of speeches handed down, was of profound contempt for woman in the moral and intellectual aspect. There were of course happy marriages, and many instances of affection for sisters and female relations or friends, and the annals of Rome presented not a few examples of very heroic and superior women; but in general women merited in their conduct and their lack of intelligence in the imperial era, the contempt and censure so freely showered on them by men." Yes. But it is still true the women were only what the men

made them. They were all of them, men and women alike, living under a civilization which had no regenerative, nor even self-sustaining, energy in it.

It was Christianity—the Christianity which Paul preached at Philippi, and which Lydia and the soothsaying slave maid embraced, that exalted woman to the honor and influence now accorded her in Christian countries. Laws and governments and forms of society have changed with the progress of the centuries; but woman has not ceased to wear the halo with which Christianity invested her, and her movement has been upward. Maine in his "Early History of Institutions," "admits," so says Brace, "that among all the influences which have made the two great branches of the Aryan race so different, the Hindoos on the one side and the Europeans on the other, the one most powerful in forming the civilization of each is, that the one branch steadily carried forward the series of reforms which elevated woman, and the other, though going a little way, recoiled from them." One was Christian, and the other was not.

The movement of woman is still onward. Her position in the world was never so assured and commanding as at this moment. Never before were so many avenues of work open to her; never so many opportunities for culture; and never was she exercising her tact and strength in so many helpful directions and putting forth her energy in so many spheres of beneficent activity.

A great French writer has said that the nineteenth century is woman's century. It is. But the nineteenth century is not so much woman's century as the twentieth will be. The advance which had been registered will never stop until man's rights and woman's rights are

measured by the same everlasting standard of equal and exact justice, and the sacred privilege is accorded her to make the most of herself, and to employ her talents in forms of industry to which they are best suited.

Our modern phrase—the "new woman"—is not yet altogether clear of a certain tone of reproach. It is still the fashion in some quarters to speak of her in accents which indicate serious apprehension or ill-disguised contempt. But such language has an antique flavor; and one always feels he has heard it before. If in the use of her larger freedom the "new woman" occasionally makes herself ridiculous, and gets brought up with round turns of caricature, it is no more than has been happening to men ever since the days of Adam. Widening intelligence, good sense, an increasing feeling of responsibility, and a cultivated taste, may be confidently counted on to correct any little idiosyncrasies in conduct.

At all events woman is here in a new aspect and relation to society. Whether she be what we technically call the "new woman" or not, woman has come to have a new place and a new right and a new power under our Christian civilization. One of the writers already quoted, in speaking of the position actually held by women under the Roman system, and the position to which she was assigned under the faith of Jesus, uses this language: "It was the continual reproach of the early enemies of the Christians that they put women in so high a position. Women had from the first a strong influence in the Church; the earliest converts from all ranks of society were women; and the example of Christ and the apostles has given the key-note to all modern civiliza-

tion in the tender respect and dignity thrown around" woman.

Mrs. Potter Palmer did no better single service in her brilliant career in connection with the Columbian Exposition than when at a little conference she put in substance this searching question to Vivekenanda: "Why does not your religion do something for women?" In its bearing on a fundamental difference between Hindooism and Christianity nothing could be more significant than the answer: "We do not wish to do what you call 'something for women'; woman is as we want her to be." By the "we" he meant, of course, himself and other men. Woman in India is as the men of India who are under sway of the prevailing type of religion in that country wish to have her. Everybody knows just what this means. It means a woman ignorant, degraded, cruelly oppressed, and excluded from the free intercourse with society which stands for so much in the way of best development for all intelligent and refined natures. It means a woman so cramped and despised and ill-treated that, without radical changes, she can never be the center and ornament of a sweet, beautiful home.

It takes Christianity to develop woman into her highest and finest type. This Christianity has been doing, not steadily, not always consistently, but doing from the outset. Wherever Christian ideas and principles have failed to reach or to dominate, woman remains in substantially the same estate, and under substantially the same disabilities, to which she was assigned by the pagan civilization. Wherever Christ has admission into the domestic and social life of a people, woman has been promoted; and her present and her prospective

exaltation among the most progressive and cultivated nations of the world is the outcome of the transforming energy of Jesus Christ.

While Christianity, as embodied and expressed in the main through the activity of the churches, has been doing this work for women, what now, have women been doing in behalf of the churches, and through the Church, to advance the great ends for which we have Christianity?

1. *Women have added largely to the numbers of the Church.*

Had women been as backward to accept and confess Christ as men have been, whatever influence the Christian churches have been able to exert, through impressions derived from the bulking of numbers, would have been much lessened. Too great stress is not to be laid on this. But if we are to have churches we must have somebody to constitute them; and if it is a merit to take an open stand for Christ, and to exert a positive influence for Christ, so far as can be done by taking an open stand, then this merit must be accorded to woman in an eminent degree. For women are largely in excess of men in all our lists of members. There are many churches which never would have been organized, or having been organized would have been forced to disband, had it not been for the number of faithful women who were ready to identify their names and lives with them. "Why is it?" does someone ask. "Why is it that the women are readier than the men to confess Christ, and unite themselves to His people?" In my judgment there are two answers to the question, either one of which would be enough.

The first answer is that women are more open, in gen-

eral, both in mind and heart, to divine influence. "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." The second answer is that women have more moral courage—not physical, but moral courage—than men; and they are more likely to follow their convictions.

2. *Women have very greatly increased the devotional spirit of the churches.*

They have helped to keep spirituality alive, and to swell the currents of it. It was a significant fact—significant in its retrospect and significant in its prospect, that Paul found these women at Philippi gathered by the riverside for prayer. Think of the volume of prayer which has ascended, like incense from a sacred altar, during these Christian centuries, from individual women and from small circles of women, into the ear of God in thanksgiving and in supplication for the divine blessing. It is hard work to keep the Church from swinging over to the world and coming under its power altogether; but it would be a great deal harder were it not for the systematic and earnest cryings from devout women for the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. There is more faith; there is more trust; there is more resignation to the divine will; there is more of soft walking before God; there are more open Bibles; there are more family altars; there are more religious interviews and conversations; there are more who hold fast in the midst of temptation to the strong hand of Christ; there are more to whom heaven seems near and precious; there are more to stand on the right side in all great moral struggles; there are more to put doubts and questions behind them and go straight on in the paths of everlasting life, because of what devout

women have done, and are all the time doing, to create a spiritual atmosphere about them, and inform the Church with the light and love and hope of Jesus Christ.

3. *Women have rendered an invaluable service to the Christian Church in the minds they have molded and the characters they have shaped for the highest forms of usefulness in spreading abroad a knowledge of the truth and advancing the Divine Kingdom.*

Here is a narrative of what a believing and faithful woman did centuries ago to set the interests of the Christian religion forward. By her efforts and influence she put a man into the sacred ministry whose power in his own day was marvelous, and whose name and work are still forces for good in the circles of earnest and aspiring souls. It is the story of Anthusa and her boy, John Chrysostom—the "golden-mouthed," who preached with such effectiveness there at Constantinople fifteen hundred years ago. His mother, at the early age of twenty, lost her husband. From that time on till he was ready for his active duties in life, she devoted herself to the education of her son. Offers of marriage came to her, but she refused them, that all her time and strength and experience and culture might go to the faithful training of this cherished son. Her intelligence and piety gave direction to the boy's thoughts and character, and determined his destiny as a man. He appreciated the loving service; and he never permitted himself to forget what he owed to maternal influence.

May it not be said, therefore, that a large share of the credit for this wonderful man's service to the Church ought to be given to his mother? But think for a moment what it was to have had even the smallest measure of influence in guiding a mind such as Chrysostom's

into the ministry. Think for a moment what that measure of influence has meant to the Church at large ever since.

But this is only one out of multitudes of similar stories. The faces of nobody knows how many millions of souls in these nineteen hundred years since the angels sang their songs over Bethlehem have been turned toward the light and toward loving service by the molding influence of sincere and consecrated women.

This influence which mothers exert in their homes, and over their own children is, however, only a small share of the molding energy which has been exerted by holy women in aid of the ends and objects for which the Church has been established and equipped for work. For consider what women have done to instruct minds and turn thoughts toward Jesus Christ, as teachers, as writers of essays and hymns and books—many of which have been so helpful to others. Mrs. Stowe did a magnificent service for the Church of Christ throughout the world when she wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin." When Mrs. Sarah Flower Adams penned "Nearer My God to Thee," and gave it to the religious public, she furnished wings to many a soul on which to rise into the high places where God is seen and felt. Charlotte Elliott condensed the duty and the privilege of every sinner into a single stanza of a single hymn when she gave shape to "Just as I am, without one plea." Two contributions, like these to the service of song in worship are precious and abiding testimonies to the help which has been rendered by women to devout feeling and utterance. Were we to take in all the contributions made by women to religious literature, and to include in our survey the wide influence women have exerted by their

character and example, the evidences of the value of woman's service to Christianity would be overwhelming.

4. *Women have multiplied the aggressive forces of the Church, and made it possible for the Church to do vastly more in winning souls into the light, and building them up in righteousness, than could ever have been done without their aid.*

In evidence recall what women are doing in our Sunday-schools, in benevolent organizations, in reform movements, in missionary societies, to instruct the ignorant, to regain the wandering and vicious, to stay the tides of evil, and to fill the earth with the knowledge of the glory of God.

Never was there such a service rendered to woman as was rendered when Christianity was carried to her and she accepted it. Never was a service better repaid than Christianity has been by the magnificent work which has been done for God and humanity by redeemed and consecrated women.

Christian Joy.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice."—*Phil. 4:4.*

XVII.

CHRISTIAN JOY.

With each face shining with gladness at thought of the wonderful child who was born at Bethlehem so near now to nineteen hundred years ago, and with many carols and jubilant songs and the high strains of triumphant oratorios rolling from our lips, the occasion would seem to be a suitable one for dealing with a theme which is at once so pertinent and so full of permanent interest,—the theme of—*Christian Joy.*

No birth into our race ever brought so much joy as the birth of Jesus. No religion of which we have knowledge is so characterized by joy as the Christian religion.

The story of the life of the Son of Man on earth begins with the adoration and praise of shepherds, with reverent and grateful offerings of gold and frankincense and myrrh by wise men of the East, and with music by the multitude of the heavenly host so lofty and enchanting that the great refrain: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace," still lingers in the hearts and on the lips of men, and from age to age fills the lives of increasing numbers with cheer and hope. As we catch glimpses in apocalyptic vision of this same Son of Man exalted to His high estate at the right hand of the Majesty on high, it is still emotions of exultant joy He is exciting in the breasts of those who are

round about Him; and the ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands sing their new song, and with great and melodious voice declare: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."

In assuming a bodily form Jesus knew humiliation. Jesus bore burdens,—such burdens as none other ever bore; for He bore the sin of an alienated and condemned race. Jesus suffered. He became a suffering Savior; and it is impossible to dissociate His name from the agony and shame of the cross.

But Jesus when He came down to us from the Father brought light and gladness into the world. As He walked about amongst men, guiding the erring, healing the sick, restoring the fallen, and forgiving the sins of the lost and guilty, He diffused light and gladness. The whole influence of His teaching and life and death has been to cheer sad hearts with bright outlook, and to substitute smiles for tears.

The counsel of the apostle, therefore, is in exact line with the spirit of the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Gospel of joy. It is impossible to enter into any right conception of the incarnation of the Son of God, and realize at all what it signifies, without experiencing sensations of joy.

Two points in the passage now before us call for emphasis.

1. *The rejoicing is to be constant.*

"Rejoice in the Lord *alway*." It is to be joy everywhere and all the time. Joy is the normal state of a true disciple. Serious-mindedness and downright earnestness are not inconsistent with joy, any more than

giggling and cackling are necessarily expressions of joy. Joy is deep. More often than otherwise joy is quiet. But when it is present in the soul it lights up the whole being, and makes one superior to morbid feelings and melancholy forebodings and the whole over-clouding brood of fears and misgivings with which even good people sometimes darken the skies of life.

Temperaments differ. Some men are born with their faces away from the sun, and the paths they walk are always darkened by their own shadows. Other men are naturally radiant in their disposition, and they catch brightness from a thousand sources and they shed it all about them. Some men have to be taken up bodily, and carried across the ocean and set down in the presence of a superb Italian sunset, before they can see anything in the hue of the heavens to awaken admiration and stir enthusiasm. Other men are kindled into raptures of delight as often as they behold the tiniest cloud gilded with a sunbeam, or the day sinking to rest amid the ordinary glories of evening. Some men can never be induced to take an interest in plants and flowers, much less to go into ecstasies over them, unless in a botanic garden, or a greenhouse where tender specimens of home-growth and rare exotics are cultivated and watched. Other men cannot look upon a leaf fluttering in the breeze, or a lily resting on the bosom of the still waters, or a daisy smiling up into their faces through the grass, or a modest violet leaning over the edge of some wandering brook, without well-nigh unutterable thought of the wealth of beauty with which God has adorned our world. Some men move about amongst their fellows, receiving admiration and absorbing favors as if these were their natural right, and

without showing the slightest indication that their hearts are filled with grateful joy at these tokens of regard. Other men respond, and their natures open out in gladness, as blossoms open out and expose their beauty and breathe abroad their fragrance at the soft touch of the rays of the morning sun, at every movement of love and every expression of sympathy and every smallest courtesy. There is a constitutional difference among men in the terms on which they can be made glad. As some men can be made benevolent much more easily than other men, so some men can be led into joy much more easily than other men.

Experiences differ. Some have much less disappointment aud sickness and pain and grief than others appear to have. There are households which run along for years, and even for decades of years, without a break. The father and mother are there; and the children are there; and no chair is vacant. There are other households where the crape is often on the door; and bereavement follows bereavement until they who are on the other side of the river are more than they who remain on this side. He has little knowledge of life, and the awful struggle through which men and women are sometimes called to pass, who fancies that even the most devout and trusting souls have no difficulty in keeping the heart in a mood of joy while the face is wet with tears. When the festival days come round, and all are at the family board, and the hearthstone echos to the ring of the old familiar laughter, and chambers and hall are full of merriment, it is not a trying task, or at any rate it ought not to be a trying task, for the whole circle to be smiling and glad. But when in place of fair forms there are

only memories, and voices of greeting and song have sunk away into unbroken silence, and hands outstretching and hungry for the touch of vanished hands must close on emptiness, it is only as the heart is buoyed up and consoled by something beyond the power of earth to yield, that there can be joy. When account of stock has been taken, and the books of the establishment, manufacturing or commercial or mining or what not, show a handsome balance on the right side of the ledger, smiles to wreath the face are to be expected. It would be a strange sort of person who would not be happy in such circumstances. If, however, the year has been one of disappointment and loss, and plans have miscarried, and efforts the most earnest have come to nought, and all ventures have failed, and the story is one of disaster, it is only natural that one should be downhearted, and find it hard to sing. The week is an exceptional one which does not record the name of some man who has been led to commit suicide on account of sharp financial reverses and misfortunes. Unless there be some strong staff of divinely inspired hope on which they may lean, some inner girding of the soul by the Spirit of God, some estimate of life which exalts the invisable over the visable, and makes that which can be taken from us by the chances of trade and traffic infinitely small in comparison with that which cannot be taken away if we are in vital fellowship with the Father through faith in the Son, the inevitable influence of earthly defeats and overturnings will be to burden the heart, and cloud the face, and choke the spirit of joy. "How shall we sing the Lord's songs in a strange land?" Under want and disaster it is not easy to laugh and sing.

Paul knew all this. He knew that the temperaments of men differ, and that it is much easier for some men than for others to resist tendencies to sadness, and to throw off morbid feelings, and to move up and down the world with smiling faces and cheery tones and fountains of gladness all the time welling up in the heart. He knew that the experiences of men differ, and that while some, for a time at least, are exempt from the ills of life, others have sorrow upon sorrow. The apostle himself was in bonds when he wrote these words, and exposed to death at any moment.

But for all this his word was—"*Rejoice.*" "*Rejoice alway.*" Lest those to whom he wrote might not understand how earnest he was in this counsel, and how much he meant by it, he repeated the charge: "Again I will say—*Rejoice.*" Joy—constant joy—was Paul's thought and wish for all disciples.

II. *The rejoicing is to be in the Lord.*

"Rejoice *in the Lord.*" "Rejoice in the Lord *alway.*" Here we come upon the philosophy and uncover the secret of a constant joy.

Quite likely as we have been revolving in our minds this matter of a constant joy—keeping the soul all the while, no matter what the outward circumstances may be, in a frame and temper of joy, the question has more than once leaped to the lips: "How do this?" "By what method or process is it possible for one who is in pain, or who is smitten and overturned by the mishaps of life, or who has been plunged into the depths of bitter affliction, to rise up into a consciousness of joy?"

The answer lies right here. It is in the Lord. Only by making the Lord the ground of the rejoicing can one be in mood to rejoice always. No other object is large

enough, nor inspiring enough, nor enduring enough, to keep the soul warm and bright with a perpetual gladness. To no other source than the Lord can we look for this help which will enable us to triumph over our own feelings of grief and despondency when the waves have gone over us and we are naturally sensible only of our great losses.

Dr. Bacon of New Haven stood beside the open grave of a son who was the pride and comfort of his heart, and with clear voice joined with others in singing the doxology. It was both touching and wonderful. But it was not because his burden of grief was small, and his sense of love light and transient; it was rather because Christ was so much to him, and His promises so real, and the life to come so sure and glorious to his anticipation, that joy overmastered his sorrow, and made him submissive and strong and hopeful.

There is such a thing as sorrow conquering joy; and there is such a thing as joy conquering sorrow. But joy never conquers sorrow, and makes it serviceable to the purifying and enlarging of spiritual life,—never really triumphs in sorrow and over sorrow—until there is a falling back on the living and ever-present and victorious Christ.

"Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil.

But when the Lord has planted grace,
And made his glories known,—
There fruits of heavenly joy and peace
Are found, and there alone."

Through Him men may be conquerors and more than conquerors, in all sorts of conflicts, and over all sorts of

foes, and under all sorts of disheartening conditions; and while retreating outwardly they may advance inwardly, and while they weep and moan they may yet be joyful in the Lord. This was the prophet's high faith: "For though the fig tree shall not blossom; neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the Lord of my salvation."

It is not to be forgotten, however, that what the apostle enjoins, as it is what the prophet in the words just quoted asserts, is joy in the Lord. It is not in the things of the Lord; it is in the Lord. It is not in the favors and gifts of the Lord; it is in what the Lord Himself is in His being and attributes and character. "Rejoice *in the Lord*."

People are ready enough to rejoice in the fruits of the goodness of the Lord,—sometimes in association with His name, and sometimes in utter forgetfulness of His connection with these tokens of His loving-kindness. They rejoice in fields waving with the wealth of abundant harvests. They rejoice in orchards with laden boughs and vineyards with large and luscious clusters. They rejoice in prolific flocks and herds, and in mines which yield them riches. They rejoice in a due proportion of rain and sunshine for their meadows, in the success of their looms, in prosperous breezes for their ships, in markets for their merchandise, and in the good fortune which comes to their undertakings. They rejoice in their health, in their unbroken homes, in the friendships with which their lives are blessed, in the beauty, it may be, which they observe in sky and forest and

mountain and valley and placid lake and singing brook and in all the varied forms of wisdom and grace about them. They rejoice in the works of literature and art which men of genius have contributed to the stimulation and happiness of the race. They rejoice in the advantages which a progressive civilization has put within their reach. They rejoice in life, and in the abounding opportunities of life, and in the multitudinous ways in which God through nature ministers to their gratification.

But how many strike through and go behind all these manifestations of goodness, and fix their thought on the Lord, and make Him the source and spring of their rejoicing? Were the Lord only a blind force, and not a personal intelligence; only a blind force, and not a loving sympathetic heart; only a blind force, and not an over-brooding Presence, it would be different. We might then appropriate whatever comes to us along the lines of nature and providence, and neither offend any divine power, nor degrade our own characters, by exhibitions of ingratitude. As it is we do our own souls wrong, and we wrong Him in whom we live and move and have our being, if we do not make the gift an occasion for going back to the Giver, and find in Him the supreme and final reason for all our gladness. It is in the Lord that we are to rest and exult.

If we think for a moment we shall see that the Lord is an all-sufficient ground of rejoicing. There is nothing in Him which may not well excite admiration and delight. "There is nothing," as has been fitly said by another, "which our souls can want, our hope desire, our happiness need, our immortality grasp, that is not laid up in Him." In Him is perfect purity; in Him is

light; in Him is life; in Him is righteousness; in Him is an unmeasured wealth of grace; in Him is a love which overflows upon all mankind, and makes Him, in virtue of His voluntary sufferings on the cross, the Savior of a lost race.

It would be foolish to say there are no other sources of joy than those found in the Lord. There are. There is the joy which children know when life is just blooming out, and there are no bitter memories to torment, and the future is full of beckoning hopes. There is the joy which strong men know when they have reached maturity, and no infirmity plagues and hinders, and ordinary burdens are tossed lightly off, and it is an exhilaration to work and do business. There is the joy which grows out of success in life,—financial success, political success, social success, literary success, professional success, and some of these successes are such,—so entirely the outcome of ability and foresight and industry and conscience—that they may appropriately be made the occasion of hearty congratulation. There is the joy of friendship, such as is experienced where confidence is mutual, and love moves freely from heart to heart, and thought quickens thought in mutual interplay, and aspiration kindles aspiration, and this is often a high and sacred joy.

But it needs no words to show that all joy of this order, from the nature of the case, can be only transient. Youth is very soon left behind. Maturity of manhood gives place to age before one knows it. The successes of yesterday become pleasant recollections, but they can never be repeated. The brain becomes dull and the heart sluggish, and the whole career passes over into history,—if it has been a brilliant one to be

recounted for a little while, and then, with all the others, to be remanded to oblivion.

When one rejoices in the Lord, he rejoices in that which adds a keener zest to every true earthly joy, and sanctifies it, and he also rejoices in that which abides forever. For he who is identified by faith and love with the Lord, and whose life is bound up with the life of the Lord, has share in the Eternal.

The watchword of the Christmas season is joy, and the spirit of it is joy. It is joy in the love of God. It is joy in the gift of God. It is joy in the birth of the Babe at Bethlehem. It is joy in what the wonderful child grew to be. It is joy in a Savior who is willing and able to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is joy in the new spirit which has been shed abroad in humanity by the teaching and life and death of the loving and faultless Jesus. It is joy in the higher motives He has brought to bear on men, to be pure and large and true, and the clearer evidence He has furnished of the immortality of human souls. It is joy in the fellowship of which our Lord assures us, and the heavenly help He promises to lend us. Is not the hour a suitable one for retuning our harps, and pitching the music of our lives anew to the key-note of joy in the Lord?

Christian Forbearance.

"Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand."—*Phil. 4: 5.*

XVIII.

CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE.

In building up character on the model furnished us by the Perfect Man there is need of the passive as well as the positive and aggressive virtues. Along with strength there should be gentleness; along with determination there should be considerateness; along with the faculty of quick comprehension there should be patience with those who are not so alert of mind; and along with the sharpest kind of self-arraignment for shortcomings there should be the tenderest charity for those who seem to fail in the struggle with their own easily besetting sins.

This is what the passage now in hand for consideration forces upon our attention; and the subject which naturally grows out of it is: *Christian Forbearance.*

The primary meaning of the word here rendered "*forbearance*" is most likely "*yieldingness,*"—or the disposition not to assert one's rights and push one's claims to the uttermost. Our modern phrase—"*sweet reasonableness*"—would come pretty near being an exact interpretation of it. It is *equity* leaning to the other side where one's own interests are involved. It is *fairness* blossoming out into *generosity* when it comes to be a question of giving up or insisting on our own way in instances in which other ways are open. It is the opposite of self-assertion and contention,—the mood of mind in which one is ready to make allowances and surrender much for the sake of peace and harmony.

We get a further clew to what "forbearance" practically signifies by looking a little into the associations which the apostle has given to the word. Words, like men, are often known by the company they keep. In 2 Cor. 10: 1, Paul says: "Now I Paul myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness," or "forbearance," "of Christ." "Meekness" and "forbearance" are here made close of kin. In 1 Tim. 3: 3, Paul says: "but gentle," or "forbearing," "not contentious." Here "forbearance" and non-self-assertiveness or peaceableness are brought together and made mutually interpretative. It is substantially the same in other passages. This is the way James characterizes the wisdom which is from above: it is "pure," "peaceable," "gentle," or "forbearing," and "easy to be entreated." Peter combines the word with "good"—"good and gentle," or "forbearing," and then puts them both in contrast with "froward."

It will be seen therefore, that the leading or underlying thought in "forbearance" is *yielding*, or as it has been called after Luther in his Bible, "yieldingness." The apostle was aiming to advance the "saints" to whom his letter was addressed, both in the knowledge and likeness of Christ. It was his passionate desire to aid these brethren to a constant progress in reflecting the mind and following the example of Christ. To do this they must be much in prayer; they must stand fast in the Lord; they must be full of faith; they must enter more and more into the deep meaning of the incarnation and crucifixion; and they must rejoice in their salvation and in their fellowship with the Lord. But along with all this, if there was to be conformity to the will and spirit of Jesus, and unity and efficiency and

mutual helpfulness in the Church, there must be the habit of forbearance. Forbearance must be set forth and lived out in their lives.

Thus we see what it is. The man who is forbearing in the sense in which forbearance is here urged will be gentle, kind, considerate. He will not magnify trifles, and make a stand on insignificant points, and lay down the hard and fast rule that anybody who wants his aid, or who is to work with him, must come to his terms and fall in with his ideas; but many things which seem to him to be wise both in aim and method, or which are really his due, he will readily forego. He will not be one to rule or ruin. He will illustrate, in some degree at least, the lofty measure of self-abnegation and sweetness which is brought out when love sways the soul and controls action. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; . . . seeketh not her own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth." This is forbearance, and forbearance in its perfect manifestation.

Having seen what forbearance is and defined it to our thought, what, now, are some of the more pressing reasons for the exercise of forbearance in our intercourse with those who are closely associated with us in various forms of activity and with the world at large?

1. *An obvious reason, and one which would seem to be sufficiently commanding even were it left to stand alone, is found in our own imperfections, and the necessity we are under in virtue of our imperfections of taxing more frequently, perhaps, than we suspect, the forbearance of other people.*

Were we absolutely faultless; were we never wrong in our judgments; were we never anything but superlatively wise in our aims and methods; were we never to act on impulse, but always in the clear white light of high principle; were we never to yield so much as the momentary control of our natures to some over-heated and clamorous passion, but to keep all our faculties and inclinations and energies well in hand, and our characters without spot or blemish or any such thing; were we never in word or deed to give occasion to associates and on-lookers to put a charitable construction on what we say and do, and not infrequently to exemplify a large patience toward us, but were always so true and transparent and lofty in utterance and act that it would be impossible for anybody seriously to question our motives or our conduct, still we could not afford to be wanting in the grace of forbearance. There is no likeness to Christ without a large measure of forbearance. There is no likeness to any worthy follower of Christ without a large measure of forbearance.

But we are not faultless. There is not one of us who does not have some crook in his mental and moral constitution; some deficiency or some over-plus to mar symmetry and diminish comfort and test the courtesy of the world. There is not one of us who can stand plumb to anything like a divine ideal. In our natures and characters we are like a coast line of the ocean. There are spaces where the shores are bordered with verdure, and skies and waters meet and blend in a wealth of beauty. Rivers pouring in here and there bring to the embrace of the tides the freshness and purity of the far-away mountains. All along quiet sheltered bays offer safe harborage to storm-driven ships. But there

are jutting headlands, there are concealed rocks and ledges, there are treacherous shallows, of which one must beware.

We are rash, and people must look with indulgent eyes on some of our ill-considered movements. Or we are quick tempered and on the slighest provocation fly into a rage and fling our fiery speech right and left, and people must take our infirmity into account in their estimates of our worth. Or we are selfish and when it comes to submitting to inconvenience of any kind, or of helping good causes, or of bearing our share of common burdens, are quite likely to be found wanting, and people must cover up the weakness as best they may. Or we are over-forward and people have to find excuses for us on the ground of a little too generous natural supply of self-confidence. Or we are too backward, and people have to say of us that our failures are due to our modesty. Or we trip and fall under some burden which has been laid upon us, or in wrestling with some temptation which confronts us, and people have to draw on their stores of tender considerateness, and say that if all the circumstances were known criticism might not be quite so harsh. At any rate, if people were not to do this it would fare ill with us. For we are constantly making mistakes, and falling out of the way on the one side or the other of the straight line of wise and righteous action. We go too far, or we do not go far enough. We speak too quick, or we do not speak quick enough. If we are positive in our opinions we are quite likely to lack tenderness. If we are tender, we are in danger of becoming sentimental and maudlin. The balance of a faultless life is hard to reach and maintain.

If a Christian forbearance were not exercised in our

behalf every day, we should all of us have to go under.

2. *Another reason just as obvious as the first one, lies in the fact that as we individually need to have forbearance brought into play in our behalf, so it is only doing toward others what others have to do toward us over and over again, not to hold those with whom we are associated to too rigid an interpretation of their obligations and duties to us, and not to judge them with too much severity for any seeming delinquency in their conduct.*

This reason is twin to the one just given, and they both grow out of the limitation of our nature. We have high endowments and possibilities which are immense; but under a close cross-examination we should all have to admit that at times at least we are little other than bundles of nerves and prejudices with an inordinate sensitiveness to anything like rudeness of touch. There are people in the world who are naturally so even-tempered, and so well trained, and so uniformly considerate and courteous in their conversation and dealing with others, that they never appear to be irritated by disagreeable things said and done, nor thrown from their balance by shocks the most sudden and groundless of bitter complaints. But these are the few. The majority have sharpness. They are not spheres, uniform and smooth of surface all around; but blocks with angles, and when they move it is liable to be with jolts and jars

Hence it is both wise and kind not to be over-exacting, but to cultivate the disposition which surrenders, and surrenders much, if need be, for the sake of good-fellowship and success in work. If we try to get everybody to walk by our individual chalk-mark, and think

just as we do, and speak just as we do, and act in all circumstances just as we do, we shall have any amount of trouble; but if now and then we go to other people's chalk-marks, and walk by them, although it may not seem to us that they have any right to demand it, it will only be squaring things up a little and making everybody feel better.

There are principles, there are attitudes, there are duties, concerning which the word "yielding" or "compromise" must not be so much as named. There are wrongs and injustices which it is the obligation of every honest man to denounce. There are inhumanities and impositions in society which all decent and well-meaning citizens are bound to smite with their sternest condemnation. There are truths which must be maintained at all hazards. Persons who are trying to undermine the foundations of Christianity, or to substitute mob-rule and anarchy for order in the State, or to turn homes into harems, or to get rich by fraud and lying, or to exalt vice in any of its forms at the expense of virtue, are not fit subjects for any extraordinary degree of forbearance. There is a sense in which the utmost kindness is to be shown to the unwise and wayward and criminal. But wrong doing calls for exposure and protest. Schemes which are hatched by sharp-witted rascals that they may prey upon the industrious and innocent have no claim to toleration. Fortunately he who has charged us to exercise forbearance one toward another has himself shown us how with pronounced vigor to oppose all iniquity.

But when the matter is brought over into the sphere —not of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, of morality and immorality, of loyalty and disloyalty to

truth and duty,—but of the expedient and inexpedient, of considerateness and severity, then we are to go just as far as we can to accommodate our conduct to the notions and habits,—or perhaps it would be better to go further and say—to the idiosyncrasies and whims of other people.

This applies, as the apostle applied it, to circles of disciples. It might not seem at first flush that those who had come into the fellowship of Christ, and had put their minds and hearts under the training of His precepts, and had made His life their model, would ever stand in need of such an exhortation; but experience and observation teach us quite otherwise. Even the genuinely converted are sometimes converted only in spots. They are converted; but their pride is only slightly modified. They are converted; but their temper is still of the inflammable kind, and is quite likely to explode under the friction of a very small provocation. They are converted; but their avarice clings to them with a good deal of the old grip. They are converted; but they are very far from being weaned from the ambitions and pleasures of the world, and when the two present irreconcilable appeals the chances are that opiates of some sort will be administered to the conscience, and the obligations of discipleship will be overborne by the inclinations of the outward man. They are converted; but their personal peculiarities often remain about as they were, and they are conceited; or they are touchy; or they are jealous; or they are obstinate; or they are mercurial, up and down, one day hot with enthusiasm enough to storm a city, and the next day cold as an iceberg; or they are fiercely exacting and

they have to be handled like a basket of eggs or a group of impetuous children.

This is where forbearance is to come into play. Men and women who love Christ, and who wish above all things else to be like Christ, and to manifest His mind in their lives, are to suit their actions,—up to the point when to go further would be to do violence to some principle or some standard of duty—are to suit their actions to the individualities of the people they are associated with. They are to be like boats on our western rivers which have not infrequently to make sharp and adroit turns to avoid running into the banks, when to go plowing straight on and run into them would neither help the banks nor the boats.

3. *An additional reason for the exercise of forebearance grows out of the consideration that to be forbearing, or gentle and yielding, not demanding that other people shall adjust their words and actions to our peculiarities, but doing our best to adjust our words and actions to their peculiarities, is at once to magnify the grace of God in Christ, and to clothe our example with power.*

People who make light of the slips and shortcomings of those who have confessed the Son of God, and claim to be His followers, or rather, perhaps, desire to have it known that they are trying to be His followers, have only small appreciation of what they are talking. The slips and shortcomings are not necessarily to be attributed to insincerity, nor to indifference, nor in very many instances to a lack of earnest endeavor to put on Christ and be like Him; but to the inherent difficulty of bringing our whole nature,—mind, will, affections, appetites,

passions, desires, aspirations, and all our methods and habits and outlooks on life—into complete conformity to the standard set up for us by our Lord in His teachings, and in the teachings of His inspired apostles. A man is converted when he is turned about, and his face is set toward God instead of away from God. A man is converted when his controlling choices are for righteousness, and the things which make for righteousness; but ordinarily, not always but ordinarily, it takes a long time and much severe discipline to bring all the minor elements and dispositions of our nature into accord with God and under the power of an endless life.

This result, whenever it is accomplished, and in whatever person, is to be set down to the credit of the grace of God in Christ. It is the work of the Spirit of Christ in the soul. Not otherwise are wild passions subdued, and clamorus appetites held in check, and hot tempers forced into subjection, and the obstinacy and determination of firm wills conquered, and the evidences of a new creation in principle and feeling and aim and outlook brought out into view. Men who have any adequate sense of the hardness of the task in effecting these moral and spiritual changes never fail to ascribe them to divine influence brought to bear on the heart and in the life.

If men are forbearing, therefore, in the degree and temper of a true Christian forbearence, it will be because they have Christ in their souls, regulating, guiding, inspiring. If they have Christ in their souls, to aid them in mastering the factors of evil which are more in number and mightier in our nature than it often occurs to us to realize, and to direct in the use of capabilities and energy, they will be forbearing. Other men will

take notice of their forbearance because they cannot help it. It will be forced upon their attention. The injunction: "Let your forbearance be known to all men," will fulfil itself.

But study for a closing thought the motive which the apostle brings forward for exemplifying this forbearance. "The Lord is at hand."

This statement admits of two interpretations. It may mean that the Lord is near in His approach or advent. Or it may mean that He is near of access, and that one does not have to go far for His help.

The latter would seem to me to be the preferable interpretation; for that He is at hand to aid with His divine grace; that He is near to breathe light into our minds, and to succor our weak wills, and to lend needed strength to meet and resist temptation, is not open to question. This was the view which the psalmist took of the nearness of the Lord. "Thou art near, O Lord." "The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him." He is not afar with His strength and wisdom and love, but within easy reach,—always accessible to those who need Him, and desire to lay hold on His assistance. He is standing by us, and when the evil and the good are wrestling within us; or when unexpected assaults are made upon us, and our patience is tried, and our whole souls are vexed and irritated, we may put our hand in His, if we will, and gather self-control and calm from His sweet and over-brooding presence. He is standing by us, nearer to us than any earthly friend ever can be; and if we only enter into this fact and what it means, it can never be so hard to put away resentment, and stifle bitter feelings, and cool down the anger which would find expression in rasping speech, and hold the whole

man in loyal subjection to a warm brotherly love.

The Lord may be at hand in other senses. He may be at hand with misfortunes and troubles. He may be at hand with His messenger of death. He may be at hand with the disclosure to one and another of us of the judgment. But he is surely at hand to help; and whoever is tried by the rebellious elements in his own nature, or by the frictions and irritating surprises which come from the world without, may turn to Him in the assurance that He does not have to be sought afar. He is a very present help in trouble. He will aid us if we will but let Him, in the devolopment of a forbearance which shall be in the highest sense Christian, and which shall also be both a comfort to ourselves, and a refining and elevating influence in the world.

From Anxiety Through Prayer to Peace.

"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."—*Phil. 4: 6–7.*

XIX.

FROM ANXIETY THROUGH PRAYER TO PEACE.

This passage is intensely practical. It deals with pressing personal needs and problems. It lays bare a trouble which is common to almost all Christian experience; it points out the means and method of relief from this trouble, and it shows what is at once the ground of safety and the exceeding great reward of those who follow out these directions. The starting and returning point, or the underlying and unifying thought of the passage, is—a right attitude of soul toward God. But falling in with the course of suggestion as it lies on the surface, and tracing the import of the apostle's instructions, clause by clause, it will be more natural and simpler to turn our general theme into this form: *From Anxiety Through Prayer to Peace.*

The section of Scripture yielding this theme affords another one of the many beautiful and impressive instances in which the apostle seeks to come close to the hearts of his fellow-disciples, and ease them of their pains, and lift their whole lives higher. To get people forward; to get them up into more light, more purity, more courage and hope and joy, more efficiency in service—this was always the aim of Paul. To break away from the fellowship of the world and enter into a deeper fellowship with God was his aspiration for himself and others.

I. *The first injunction, or better, perhaps, the first entreaty, here laid down has to do with anxiety.*

"In nothing be anxious."

Why not? Why not fret and worry? Why not fill the sky of life with clouds of misgiving, and darken down existence by keeping the sun of hope in perpetual eclipse? Why not pitch tent and dwell under the brooding fear that though things are right to day—health, business, friendships—they will be sure to be wrong to-morrow? Why not intensify all the pains and perplexities and vexations and burdens of the present moment—severe and trying enough at best—by looking at them through morbid eyes, and then setting the imagination to work to people the future with sorrows and losses and all sorts of direst calamities? Why not add care to care and so be just as miserable as possible?

The root idea of the Greek word which is here translated, "anxious," is a divided mind. The mind is looking two ways: is vibrating between two attractions; and it has found no place as yet where it can settle down and be at rest. Hence the sense of weariness caused by anxiety. The root idea of the English word "anxious," like that of "anger," is choking. It is obstruction, distress, pain, carried over from the bodily conception of it into the sphere of the mind. Under the pressure of this anxiety one becomes apprehensive, solicitous, confused; and every cloud becomes a darker cloud, and every weight becomes a heavier weight, and every outlook more ominous and dreadful. To yield to anxiety is to turn evil conjurer and play all kinds of alarming tricks on one's own heart. It is to be a prophet of night rather than sunshine, of tears rather than songs.

There would be some justification for anxiety were there any good in it, but there is not.

Nothing is accomplished by it. The train does not arrive a single minute earlier because one goes to the station a couple of hours before schedule time, and makes the long waiting seem tenfold longer and more dreary by fancying that the expected friend is surely sick or that the cars are off the track. If there is some encouraging word to be spoken, or some helpful deed to be done, matters can be set forward; but to sit still, and paint pictures of disaster, and forecast ruin to friends and enterprises, does not mend anything. The business is not put on a safe foundation by it. The sick person is not healed by it. The reform is not advanced by it. The soul is not brought to Christ and saved by it. Nothing is so inefficient for good as anxiety.

But this is not the whole of the story. Anxiety weakens and wears one out. Charles Kingsley well says: "Do to-day's duty, fight to-day's temptation, and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things which you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them." Under a habit of anxiety the body loses its vigor, the mind loses its tone, the will loses its force, and the heart loses its resiliency and sweetness. The innocent old farmer who wound up his alarm clock and fixed it to go off at six in the morning, and then sat up all night so as to be sure to hear it when it struck, but who was so exhausted by his tedious vigil that when the morning came he could not start on his projected journey, is a fair illustration of the mischief done to one by extreme anxiousness. Generals fight better; business men handle their business more successfully; teachers get more into and more out of their pupils; mothers

conduct their households with greater ease and satisfaction, if they do not let any of their energies run to waste in anxiety.

The chief indictment, however, against anxiety is the distrust of God which it implies. Faith in God and a soul overwhelmed with misgivings come pretty near being mutually exclusive. At any rate a heart filled with the worry which narrows our spiritual horizons, and turns the sweet light of the stars into horrible darkness, has small place in it for any living and sustaining confidence in Him who notes the fall of a sparrow, and who has assured us He is ready to take upon His own heart all our burdens of care. God has not promised to do everything for us; there are some things we must do for ourselves. But He has promised never to leave nor forsake His own. He has promised to save unto the uttermost all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. He has promised that all things shall work together for good to them that love Him. Anxiety is distrust.

On this ground especially did our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount make His appeal to those who heard Him, not to worry in an over-thoughtfulness about the things of the morrow. God had them in His keeping. He knew their needs. He was not watching over the interests of birds, and the beauty of lilies, and the clothing of grasses, and forgetting all about the necessities of those higher and immortal creatures whom He had made in His own image and into whom He had breathed the breath of life. Not at all. The things essential to their existence and comfort, which the Gentiles of our Lord's day were seeking so eagerly, and which men in our day also seek so eagerly, are things our Heavenly Father knows we need. Our necessities,

our straitnesses, our wants, our natural burdens, are not surprises to God. He understands them all—feels them all. But in the midst of them all, and with reference to them all, He wishes us to trust Him.

In exact line with this the apostle comes in with his word of counsel, and says: "In nothing be anxious." It will be observed that he does not limit his advice to matters of food and clothing and shelter; but he makes it cover all objects over which men may be too solicitous. "*In nothing* be anxious." Harassing care with reference to any and every object is excluded. It takes in our disappointments, our adversities, our apparently fruitless labors, the hopes we fondly cherished, but which have not been, and possibly are never to be realized, and all the concerns in which we may be interested, or in which health and happiness and prosperity and the advance of causes we have laid on our hearts, may be involved.

This does not mean that we are not to be industrious and economical and prudent and forethoughtful. Rational exertion to gain suitable ends is not denied to one, but urged and encouraged. "It is written." Yes; but it is also "written." The man who quotes, "In nothing be anxious," in justification of laziness, or a supine folding of the hands in presence of services to be rendered and duties to be done, must not forget that the author of these words is likewise author of the words "diligent in business." Neither the indifference of the fatalist nor of the sensualist has any warrant in the Word of God. "If any will not work neither let him eat."

But the thing which is condemned, and which ought to be condemned, and from which the great apostle and

our Lord before him sought to deliver them, is the over-solicitude which burdens and benumbs the heart, and saps energy from brain and hand, and makes men forget that God is over them, and will provide for all the exigencies of their lives.

II. *This leads to the second division of the passage, and to the consideration of prayer as the way in which to get rid of anxiety.*

"But in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests to be made known unto God."

Here the "everything" looks back to the "nothing" in the preceding clause, and helps to justify the broad interpretation just put upon it. "In *nothing* be anxious; but in *everything*, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." There is nothing so large, there is nothing so small, there is nothing so irritating or troublesome; there is nothing which to some minds might seem so unsuitable to be made the subject of prayer, that one may not take straight to God, and talk with Him about it, with a view to finding light and strength and comfort.

For the purposes of exact knowledge a distinction is to be made between the two words "prayer" and "supplication." Prayer is the more general term. It is the offering up of desire to God without going into particulars, as when we say, "God help us," or "God forgive us," or "God bless us." But "supplication," or the Greek word which is rendered supplication, looks to specific petitions. It is an earnest asking for the supply of some definite and deeply-felt want, as when a man falls down before God and cries out: "My soul is hungry for the bread of life,—feed me"; or, "I have

broken thy law by falsehood or deceit or injustice,—pardon and restore me"; or, "A great burden or sorrow is on my heart,—stretch forth Thy hand and aid me in bearing it"; or, "My sinfulness looms black and awful before me,—take it and cast it forever behind Thee." We pray in general; we supplicate in particular.

But the instruction of importance is that all our troubles and trials and perplexities and burdens are to be taken right to God. We are not to meet all these difficulties in our own wisdom and might. We are not to meet them by seeking the assistance and sympathy of friends alone. We are to go to God with them in prayer and supplication. We are to open our hearts to Him. We are to tell Him our story. Omniscient though He be, and One from whom not the slightest secret of man or angel in the remotest corner of the universe can be kept, we are to make our requests known to Him. The little misunderstanding with a friend; the perplexity over the wise training of a child; the various misventures in business; the distress over some backset in cherished moral enterprises; the seemingly unsuccessful struggle over some easily-besetting sin; the bitter bereavement—each is to be made an occasion for going to God and laying it all out before Him.

The condition, however, which accompanies this direction of the apostle to take everthing to God in prayer and supplication must not be overlooked. It is thanksgiving. "In everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God."

Searching the Bible through, it is found that a good many conditions attach to acceptable prayer. Of course, the essential and unvarying condition is faith. To come

to God one must believe that He is. One must believe, too, that He is capable of moving out in the tenderness and helpfulness of a divine compassion towards those who diligently seek Him. There must likewise be the accent of sincerity and humility in any voice which would reach the ear of the Most High. It is not the man who boasts of what he is and what he has done, but the man who openly confesses all and smites on his breast in self-abasement, who goes down to his house justified. Success in prayer turns often on the earnestness and importunity of the petitioner. A cry which is repeated and continued until at length it becomes pathetic in its expression of an overmastering sense of need, if it be for some spiritual insight or aid, can hardly fail of a gracious answer; but if one only goes through the form of mouthing some old and familiar prayer-phrases, and there is no ardent longing and no serious interest in the business, nothing will ever come of it. Jacob got what he wanted because he held on and would not let the angel go until he had blessed him. The Syrophœnician woman gained her point because she was determined to stay and argue it out with the Lord. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, but he was a righteous man, and his righteousness gave an availing energy to his supplications.

To these and others which might be named, there is to be added the condition of gratitude. We are to go to God,—are to go to Him without hesitation and freely,—are to go to Him with all our embarrassments and questions and sorest hindrances and temptations,—are to go to Him day by day and moment by moment, if we will; but it is always to be with sincere thoughts of thanksgiving in our hearts and sincere words of

thanksgiving on our lips. "In everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving.*"

This instance of the association of thanksgiving with requests for further favors from God is not singular. It was the habit of Paul to be grateful himself and to urge the duty of gratefulness upon others. "*In everything give thanks;* for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to youward." "*Giving thanks always for all things* in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." "*Abounding in thanksgiving.*" Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; *and be ye thankful.*" "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein *with thanksgiving.*" The apostle found it easy to combine expressions of supplication and thanks because the two thoughts were so identified in his mind. He had a deep sense of what he wanted; but he had as well a deep sense of the multiplied mercies and measureless grace he had received. As Dean Howson has well said: "Evidently with St. Paul the law of prayer is the law of praise. Supplication and gratitude are almost always inter-linked together; or at least when one is present, the other is seldom far absent." Hence when contemplating some great truth, or some glorious future, we find the apostle breaking out into a grand doxology like: "O the depth of the riches!"

How fit this thankfulness is. For who can recount in detail what God has done for us? Who would venture upon an exhaustive enumeration of the benefits we have each of us received from His hands? Were one to write a book in which there should be drawn out, in classified form, and chapter by chapter, all the items which ought to be set down to the credit of God's good-

ness to His earthly children, how large the book would have to be! God has made every star in the firmament pay tribute to us. He has made every law in the universe serve us. He has bent down over us in the infinite compassion of His divine heart, and given us His Son to die for us on the cross. He has given us life and salvation; He has upheld us; He has strengthened us; He has guided us; and the tokens of His love to us, if we only had the wit to discern them, are more than the sands of the seashore.

We are all of us familiar, no doubt, with the way in which the late Dr. William Arnot, of Edinburgh, summed up the teaching of this passage, or rather endorsed a summing up which he found ready-made for him. "Be careful for *no*thing. Be prayerful for *every*thing. Be thankful for *any*thing." This is clear, concise, and wholesome teaching. But the thankfulness for "*any*thing" is a direction which we must see that we do not miss. Gratitude, like the scent of flowers, makes prayer fragrant. Prayer has been called myrrh and praise frankincense. Gratitude is the song the lark carries away into the skies to attract the thoughts of faith upward and the thoughts of heaven downward. We pierce the heart of our Lord when we are not thankful. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Only one turned back to give God the glory for His healing. Only one gladdened Christ.

III. *Here we arrive at the blessed result of it all in the opening out to us of the thought of peace.*

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

This is what is to come from taking our anxieties to

God, and in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, making our requests known unto Him. We are to enter into the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and in this peace find guardianship for our hearts and thoughts. The peace of God is to be at once our achievement and our defense.

But what is this peace of God? The peace of God is the peace which comes from God. It is the peace of which God is the Author. One who has gained possession of this peace will be in harmony with God, and with his own soul, and, so far as in him lies, with his fellow-men.

Observe, however, with what terms of high emphasis this peace is further characterized. The apostle was not content to call it the peace of God merely; but that it is the peace of God he made still more evident by designating it as a peace, "which passeth all understanding."

This phrase is open to several different interpretations. These are two of them. It may mean the *faculty* of understanding; or it may mean the *act* of understanding. If it means the faculty of understanding, then it is the same as if the apostle had said: "The peace of God which lies in a higher sphere than the intellect of man." If it means the act of understanding, we should have its equivalent in the words—in substance taken from Ellicott—which transcends every effort and attempt on the part of the understanding to grasp and realize it.

This latter interpretation would seem to be borne out and fully justified by language used elsewhere, as when, for instance, the apostle says in his letter to the Ephesians: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding

abundantly *above all that we ask or think.*" We cannot articulate it in speech: we cannot compass it in thought—what God is able to do for us, and what He has in His heart to do for us, if we will only let Him. So this peace of God, in its sweet serenity, in its wealth of blessing, in the fountains of holy delight which it opens and feeds, catches a trick of infinity from the divine source of it, and stretches out beyond all the little yardsticks of our human speech. It is something —this peace of God—which the alien from God cannot measure, because he does not know it. It is something the child of God cannot measure, because he does know it. "Which passeth all understanding."

But this peace of God is not only an achievement—a precious possession into which through the riches of divine grace we are permitted to find our way,—it has in it a service of defense to render. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts." The peace of God is to fortress the soul. It is to perform the functions of a stronghold, and afford one who has entered into it protection. It is as though a person were to be guarded by a watchful and invincible band of soldiers. "The peace of God shall guard your hearts and your thoughts."

How is this? In what way is it to be done? What efficacy is there in the peace of the God to hold inward foes in check and to restrain the assaults of outward foes? What is the secret and the value of this kind of protection?

Well, imagine a man so filled with the peace of God, and all his desires and thoughts and plans and hopes so penetrated with the atmosphere of this peace, that he

should have no longer any fear in his soul, nor any disturbing and benumbing doubt, nor any spirit of contention and strife, nor any of the eager grasping and discomfort of worldly ambitions, and will it not be our first impulse to say of him: "He, at least, is secure"? Such a man is garrisoned as no military genius can garrison him. He has a sentinel more vigilant than ever watched at the gateway of an imperilled prince or princess. He is safe in the desires of his heart, and he is safe in the thoughts of his mind. He is safe from inward treachery, and he is safe from outward attack.

God, through the voice of the prophet, has assured us that if our minds are stayed on Him, He will keep us in perfect peace. But this is just as true when turned about and it is the truth in this form which the apostle asserts when he declares that with the divine help the peace of God realized in the heart will make it certain that the mind will be stayed on Him. The memory of past experiences of this peace, and the joy of present experiences, and the hope of future experiences, will all cowork with God in holding heart and thought in a sacred security. When a man has been accustomed to drink from pure mountain springs, cool, bubbling, and full to overflowing, he does not like to bend over and drink from puddles. When a man has had free range in vineyards and orchards, where fruits the most luscious can be had for the taking, he is hardly willing to go back and grub for what he can get down among the roots of sage brush and thistles. When a man has fed at his father's table where there was enough and to spare, though he can eat them on a pinch, he has but little relish for husks. When a man has known God's peace, and it has been atmosphere to his soul, and sky

over him and earth under him, and the holy calm of it has penetrated and softened and elevated all his thinking, there is but small temptation for him to return to the excitements and tumults and passionate strivings of the world. So not in one way alone, but in many ways, does the peace of God operate to guard our hearts and thoughts.

But the largest and most important word in all this instruction remains to be spoken. It is *Christ*. "In Christ Jesus." "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts *in Christ Jesus*." We can have this peace because Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to tell us of our Father, and to bear our sins in His body, and to suffer and die for us on the cross. We can have this peace because all the springs and sources of peace are in Christ, and He is able and willing, yea more than willing, to communicate it to those who are identified with Him in the new divine life. It is His precious gift to those who love Him and are trying to follow Him. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you." "The fruit of the Spirit is—peace."

"Peace upon peace, like wave on wave,
This is the portion that I crave;
The peace of God which passeth thought;
The peace of Christ which changeth not.

Peace through the night and through the day,
Peace through all the windings of our way.
In pain and toil and weariness,
A deep and everlasting peace.

O King of peace, this peace bestow
Upon a stranger here below;
O Lord of peace, Thy peace impart
To every troubled, trembling heart."

High Ideals.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise think on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you."—*Phil. 4: 8–9.*

XX.

HIGH IDEALS: THEIR PLACE AND VALUE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER.

These are remarkable words,—classic in their beauty and of transcendent significance. The large organizing thought to which they conduct us is: *High Ideals—Their Place and Value in the Development of Character.*

Here is the specification of six motives which every man who aims at Christian perfection ought to keep constantly in mind; and of six elements which must be realized and illustrated in the life before one can be said to have made much headway toward Christian perfection. It may be in order for us, and also necessary, if we are to get the highest good from a study of this passage, to trace out these specifications one by one.

1. "Whatsoever things are *true*."

This is where the apostle begins—with truth. He starts where all men must start, or be false to the core. Put whatever else one may into character, but leave truth out, and there remains at best only an empty shining, sham. Nothing ever stood securely without truth for a basis; nothing ever will stand securely, unless it rests on the bed-rock of truth. Homes, customs, philosophies, religions, empires, topple into ruin, if there be not truth at the heart of them. God and God's laws cry out "woe" to anybody and to anything not centered in truth. All blessings of heavenly benediction wait

upon the soul that says to the truth: "Be thou my good genius, and whatever thou dost command I will do." Let men and women aspire as they will, but if their aspirations do not start from and embrace truth, their most glowing anticipations will recoil upon them in mockery and defeat.

It is not any form of technical truth merely which Paul would have men think about and incarnate in their lives. It is truth in its completeness, and in all its demands. It is not truth in speech merely; nor truth in the discharge of special trusts merely; nor truth in business transactions merely; nor truth in the conduct of political affairs merely; it is interior and radical moral truth. It is truth in itself and for its own sake, rich with all wealth and beautiful with all comeliness. It is truth as an achievement of the mind, and truth as a rule of conduct, covering all possible spheres and relations in which one can stand.

Would that all eyes were open to see truth in this celestial whiteness. Would that all lives were making music to the divine key-note of truth in this breadth of it.

2. "Whatsoever things are *honorable*."

Another statement of this might be: Whatsoever things are dignified, reputable, held in esteem by all who appreciate high standards of action, and who are wont scrupulously to conform their lives to an exalted rectitude. It means exactly what the old Roman word for gravity meant—something worthy to compel respect.

What a neat little tract this would make for the times: "Whatsoever things are honorable." With what fitness it might be printed and distributed in the halls

of Congress, and scattered amongst state legislatures, and thrown into executive offices and put into the hands of treasurers and pay-masters and tax-gatherers, and taken into market places, and laid down on the counters of banks and stores, and dropped into mills and counting rooms, and hung up where the common councils in all our great cities might read it, and slipped into the secret chambers of our colossal corporations and thieving rings, and made one of the standing rules in all social circles: "Whatsoever things are honorable." As it should be read how many cheeks would blush, if they are not past all blushing. How many, who have any conscience still left in them would bow suddenly down and exclaim: "That indicts me and my methods."

No man's ideal is lofty enough; no man's ideal is safe to follow, until he lifts up the banner and marches to the drum-beat of what is honorable. The estimable, the morally correct must be struck deep and clear into one's plan of life, or things will go awry.

It is not enough to be prudent and circumspect, and to hesitate in the presence of temptation to be mean and unworthy, lest standing may be lost in the estimation of the community. One is to be loyal to the kind of honorableness which has the ring of the integrity of heaven in it, and is secure of the approbation of good men not only but of God. It is to be whatsoever things are honorable when brought up against tho plumb-line which God drops down out of the skies.

3. "Whatsoever things are *just*."

Here again Paul goes to the bottom of things. It is not seeming justice or righteousness; it is not current justice; it is real justice.

One may easily test the question whether he loves and reveres justice because it is justice; or looks upon it simply as an instrumentality with which to further the ends of selfishness. For when one accepts and follows justice because it is justice, he will find himself quite as prompt and eager,—if not even more so—to render as to demand justice.

But how little of this, even though we do not look at things through pessimistic eyes, do we really see. How many the wars to avenge real or fancied wrongs. How frequent and numerous the law-suits to get even with men. How frequent assaults, one upon another, sometimes with words, sometimes with sharp tricks, sometimes with cruel blows, because some supposed insult has been inflicted, or some advantage or right has been wrested away. How indignation swells, how wrath flashes, how the voice grows loud and harsh, as men recount the ways in which they have been over-reached and cheated. What threats are indulged, what subterfuges are resorted to in order to gain redress. When one tries to cool down this heat, and restore calmness, how sharp and passionate is the cry: "We have been wronged and we will not rest till our wrongs have been righted."

Where is the reverse of this ever witnessed? Who ever saw nations rushing forward in the spirit of a divine rage to repair the breaches they themselves had made in justice? Who ever saw nations eager to restore what they themselves had unjustly taken from neighboring nations? Who ever saw men enthusiastically intent on restitution—all aglow with determination to mend the equity they had broken, and conscientiously counting out and paying over the gains they

had gotten from others by dishonest tricks and schemes?

When a man has God's justice in him he finds he has as much use for his arithmetic in estimating what belongs to others as in what belongs to himself, and he will be as careful in according as in exacting dues. It is Emerson who calls attention to the fact that we teach children to figure so that they may not be cheated, whereas it would be a higher and better use of learning to teach them figures that they may not cheat. The sense of justice in individuals and communities and states needs to be toned up till there is harmony between it and the justice which is unchangeable and eternal.

What a challenge it is when a man can stand up and say with the old prophet Samuel: "Here I am; witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I taken a ransom to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." What a tribute when the response to such a challenge is: "Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand." It is a great enconium when at the side of an open grave we can say: "The man we bury here to-day was a just man." There is hope when a young man writes it out and hangs it up as a motto where his own eyes and all eyes can rest on it morning, noon and night: "Whatsoever things are just."

4. "Whatsoever things are *pure*."

Chastity merely? More than that. Temperance merely? More than that. Hands kept clean from any stain of corruption in daily dealing merely? More than

that. Freedom from all coarseness of speech merely? More than that. Whiteness in thought merely, so that the soul is never a chamber of foul imagery? More than that. Motives which have nothing sinister in them merely? More than that. A life of abstinence from indulgences which befoul and spread contagion all abroad merely? More than that. It is all these together. It is chastity and temperance and unsullied hand and unsullied speech and unsullied thought and straightforwardness of motive and elevated aim and a life, lifted as far as possible out of all wordly defilement,—all in vital and harmonious combination. It is this in men; it is this in women—pureness.

It is pureness such as the apostle could point to when writing to the Corinthians as one of the qualities by which he had approved himself to be God's minister. It is the pureness into which, as John says, every man seeks to purify his life who has his hope set on Jesus Christ. It is the pureness through which a man sees God, and is enabled to walk with Him. It is the pureness into which the heart is cleansed by the touch of the pierced hand of Him who was nailed to the cross. It is purity in the finest quality of it and in its deepest soundings and in its widest reaches.

What a precious possession is this purity! What an achievement it is to win purity! What an inspiration! What a defense! What a reward! What a height to which to climb! Blessed in all ways are the pure in heart.

Both the need and the duty of cultivating purity are very great. With a heart full of evil and evil dispositions, and in a world of sin, and in the midst of so many influences whose direct tendencies are to draw

away from the light, and to corrupt the conscience, and to plunge the soul down into mire and filth, it is not possible to exaggerate the stress of obligation there is on us all to make the attainment of purity a constant endeavor. The possession of purity would transform life, and beautify and gladden homes, and change society through and through. Could there be purity where there is now impurity it would make a new world for us all; and the sweet light of the stars would no longer rebuke us, and the spotless delicacy and the delicious fragrance of the lily would no longer remind us of a disharmony with God.

5. "Whatsoever things are *lovely*."

What things are lovely? Those which emanate in the spirit of love, like God's gift of His only begotten Son to the world; those which move in a method of love, like faith when it works by love; and those things which have for their object the expression of love, like all unselfish efforts which are put forth to help and save and bless lost men. Whatever is conceived in love, whatever gives voice to love, whatever wins and reproduces love, is a thing of love, and belongs to the category of the "lovely."

In his matchless tribute to love Paul shows us what is his conception of things "lovely." They are the things which are more than angel tongues, and prophecies, and understandings of mysteries, and mightiest faiths, and goods bestowed, and martyrdoms. They are the things by which one is made long-suffering and kind, and kept from envying and boasting and vanity and unseemliness of behavior and self-seeking and impatience and evil-thinking,—the things by which one becomes glad, not in iniquity, but in truth; and is all-

believing, and all-hoping, and all-enduring. The things which are "lovely" are the things which, when love has full sway, never fail.

Nothing but love conquers this wide mastery and rules regnant in all these spheres. Whatever things are born of this spirit are lovely. Fulfilling the law by loving God with all the heart and mind and strength, and loving one's neighbor as one's self, is the consummation of things lovely.

But it is with more particular reference to those ministries to men to which love prompts, and by which the affections of men are engaged in turn, and they, too, are warmed into sympathy with what is good, that Paul uses the phrase. It is those things which go out to humanity bearing on them the stamp of a Christ-like devotion, that he wishes them especially to think about.

What higher and better quality to cultivate is there than love? "But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love." Strength is good; but love lends a grace to strength, and makes it beautiful as well as useful. It is a large scope which love has, and the demand for it is constant. It is both a misfortune and a sin that we do not love more. In his old age Dr. Bacon used to say that if he was to live his life over again he should try to put more love into it. He thought that lack of love, or rather of more love, was one of the shortcomings in his ministry. It is as Gerald Massey, in those days when he had not yet lost love out of his heart as he seemed to at a later period sings:

> "The world is full of beauty, as other worlds above;
> If we but did our duty, it might be full of love."

6. "Whatsoever things are of *good report*."

This "good report," however, means something more than mere personal popularity or a favorable reputation. One may speak and act in a way to meet the acceptance of men, and at the same time not fill the conditions of a "good report" as the apostle employed the words. By the skilful use of a few nice arts, and the adroit manipulation of the applauding and trumpeting machineries of the time, almost anybody, man or woman, can blow up an immense reputation with but a very small capital of character behind to support it. Or, perhaps, still better if, as in some instances, there be a ruined character to help on the interest in the puffing.

The "good report" here had in mind is the report the elders obtained through faith. It is the "good report" which a man secures when he "walks in wisdom toward them who are without." It is the "good report" which the apostle made his own because he could say he had wronged no man, and defrauded no man, though in return for his dutifulness and devotion he had received "stripes," and "imprisonment," and "tossings to and fro," and "dishonors," and "chastenings," and "sorrows," manifold. It is the "good report" of the woman of whom it is written: "She hath done what she could." It is the "good report" which is prophetic of the final and unutterably blessed: "Well done thou good and faithful servant."

To this last the apostle adds, in order to be sure of including anything desirable which may have been left out in the enumeration: "If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise." Or, as he might have said: "Whatever things are *virtuous*, and whatever things are *praiseworthy*." It is possible however, that Paul did not so much intend these two words "virtue" and

"praise" to be additions to the list of excellencies he has named, as the summing up of these excellencies. But whether one or the other be the right view, it is clear the apostle meant that nothing good should be left out of character. Not one virtue alone, though never so attractive and commanding, but all virtues must be realized if the character is to be Christlike.

These, then, the true, the honorable, the just, the pure, the lovely, the commendable, are the elemental qualities, in the apostle's estimation, of what constitutes good Christian character. They are the ideals of moral worth for whose attainment one is to do his best. They are high ideals; but in this lies their value. For than exalted aims nothing is more important in the working out of successful results. Nothing unless it be resolute and unflagging endeavor to realize these aims.

In secular spheres this is acknowledged. Hence all such proverbs are shooting at the stars in order to hit higher than the tree-tops. It has been coined in the mint of the ages, and has on it the stamp of universal experience, that there will not be much getting on where there is not much looking up. There must be something like a passion for advancement, else progress will be wanting in its leading condition. Of children, of pupils, of apprentices, of clerks, of the young and subordinate of any class, whose souls are never moved with forward and upward impulses no hope can be cherished.

Men not unfrequently make themselves ridiculous by the aims they avow. There is such wide incongruity between the ambitions they entertain, and the capacities they possess, that if one does not smile at their

strutting pretentions, it is because the sense of the ludicrous is overborne by pity.

At the same time it is aspiration, as a rule, that wins, and without aspiration one remains at the bottom.

It is true, too, that circumstances are now and then tenderly propitious, and under the favorable influence of time and powerful assistance, mediocrity occasionally climbs to a wealth and place and power out of all proportion to any inward force or merit which can be discovered. Still, even in these instances there must be an eye open to opportunities, and a spirit to kindle into concert with proffered aid, or all help is vain. A man lacking in these qualities may be helped, but he will not stay helped. As soon as the hand that held him up is withdrawn he drops. He has no vigor of purpose to keep his energy of brain and body in action.

Were it otherwise these examples would be only exceptions. The general law is as has been stated. Not in one instance in a thousand may the special results sought be secured; but in no instance will the gaining be likely to outrun the seeking. The men who have achieved greatness in legislation, in literature, in law, in war, in art, in science, in reforms, in commerce, in trade, and the women, who, like Florence Nightingale, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning and "George Elliott" and Mrs. Banister and Mary Lyon and Lucy Larcom and Anna P. Sill, who have felt a sense of somewhat in them to be developed and used, are the men and women who, with only rare exceptions, have set out with keen appetites for doing things, and who have planned and toiled under inspiration of lofty standards.

Not that these persons have always seen the end from

the beginning. Not that they have not been led. Not that they have not often builded better than they knew. Not that ambition has not fattened by what it fed upon, and success in any particular sphere led to a craving for larger success in the same sphere. But individuals as they ascend have found their guiding stars ascending also, and the objects which beckoned at any given time have always been far in advance of any ends actually accomplished. When endeavor overtakes aim, and fact done crowns idea of doing, the man or woman comes to a dead halt, and the march is ended.

But wide sweeping and invariable, or well nigh invariable, as this principle is in the realm of things material, it is absolute in the realm of the moral and spiritual life. It admits of no exceptions. Christlikeness of character cannot be thrust upon any soul. No soul can drift into it. Such excellence as the apostle contemplates is an achievement, and each must master it for himself with God's aid or never have it.

Some persons may be more amiable, more kindly, more temperate, more correct in the whole round of walk and conversation than others; they are. They have better constitutions; more poise of make-up, more native sagacity, and the entire sweep of their lives is in a better atmosphere. For some persons it may be and is much easier than for others to rise into the spirit of true conformity to God.

But high moral excellence in man or woman is something more than a nice, well-balanced temperament. It is something more than keen foresight in avoiding evil. It is something more than propitious circumstances in which one is lifted above temptation to low indulgences. It is a matter of the will, of the inmost

purpose of the soul. If men would be good they themselves must determine to be good. If men would be righteous they must elect to be righteous and build their lives on the foundation of righteousness. If men would be like God they must choose God and obey God. Chance plays no part in this high business. Holiness is never an inheritance. There is no possibility of blundering into the likeness of Christ. Every commendable element which gets into character has to be wrought into it. Every stone from base to top, that adds strength and symmetry and beauty to the moral house we are erecting, has to be hewed out and placed in position by the definite co-working of our own wills with the will of God. Outside of the divine influences under which we come for redemptive ends, there is no aid of fellowship, nor might of interceding energy, by which we can be advanced one step toward the realization of the style of character which meets God's approval. Election cannot be made for us even by those who are nearest and dearest to us. Nobody can pick us up and carry us over into virtue. It is a conquest which each, under the divine influence and help, must make by himself and for himself alone.

It is easy to see, therefore, when we take into account these simple laws of the soul what an important place one's ideals must necessarily fill in the economy of moral growth.

To begin with, a man's ideals mark and limit the possibilities of development in virtue. They do more than this. They reveal a man to himself, and they indicate his moral drift. But they also set bounds to his acquisitions in righteousness. Streams do not rise above their fountains. If a man would attain "unto the meas-

ure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," it will not do for him to keep in thought anything lower than this fashion of manhood. We hear it said sometimes, that views, theories, opinions, amount to nothing—the life one lives is all; but people who say this have little conception of the laws of our human nature. Views, theories, opinions are what sway men, and determine the bounds of their endeavors. Columbus had an idea of the structure of the globe, and it shaped his whole career, and determined the destiny of uncounted millions. George Washington had an idea of the rights of man and the possibility of free institutions and self-government, and that idea worked and changed the course of human history. Benjamin Franklin had an idea that there was something more in lightning than science had yet conceived, and behold the revolution which has followed his crude experiment with the kite. Paul had an idea, and his idea translated itself into a life whose influence is simply immeasurable. Views, theories, opinions—they are of all consequence.

But the real worth of ideals, and especially of high ideals, and the conspicuous advantage of having high ideals, is that there is a reflex influence in them by which a man is molded,—all unconsciously to himself, it may be,—into the type of character they image to his mind.

This, if my apprehension of it is correct, is in exact line with the apostle's notion when he wrote: "Think on these things." Thinking on them, making them the object of meditation, turning them over in the mind and dwelling on them, looking at them on all sides of them, and coming under the power of them, prepares one to go on and carry out the other injunction to "do"

them. "The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things *do*." These things are all done with a heartiness and success not possible otherwise when the doing has been forerun by earnest and loving and habitual thinking on them.

Indeed the thinking on these things is more than the forerunning and preparation for the realizing and doing of them. In the mysterious process of soul unfolding and growth, a man actually becomes like that which he sincerely and constantly has in thought. Partly as the result of direct endeavor, and partly, too, by a method of absorption and assimilation of which the only satisfactory philosophy is the fact itself, a man falls into the currents of his own leading reflections, and takes hue and form of character from what is uppermost in mind and heart. It is very subtle, but it is a universal law. The soul becomes like that which it habitually cherishes. Wordsworth has a passage in point:

> "We live by admiration, love, and hope,
> And as these are well and wisely fixed
> In dignity of being we ascend."

This law of the reflex influence of ideals works both ways—down and up.

It works down. Low thoughts, low desires, low interests, react and embody themselves in corresponding types of character. This is what wrought the mischief with the nations at large, and bore them down into such depths of degradation as the apostle describes in his Epistle to the Romans. God gave these people up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts. In virtue of the force of moral laws they gravitated—they could not help gravitating—right down into all vileness.

It was not something put upon them in the way of penalty from the outside,—their degradation was the natural and inevitable consequence of their own thinking and doing. They sank as all men do, whether in Jerusalem or Athens or Rome or Chicago, to the level of what is most in mind and is most cherished.

As men drop down lower and lower, so they rise higher and higher under the operation of the same principle. While evil passions, like anger and envy and pride and malice and hate and revenge and lust, frequently indulged, tend to mold a man over until he is the impersonation of moral deformity, the opposite feelings and desires, similarly indulged, tend to elevate and refine a man until his life becomes their best embodiment. Loving, like a fine sculptor, chisels the whole nature into a diviner likeness to love. Believing makes one more and more a child of faith. Giving, beyond anything else, fosters in the soul a spirit of generosity. Contemplating God, as in moods and acts of sincere worship, brings God closer and closer to the heart. Prayer is infinitely more than this,—else it were nothing,—but no genuine prayer was ever yet offered which did not have an answer of good in itself. Right thoughts are wings on which we ascend and make approach to the character of saints in light. High ideals put us in the way of being helped by God, and by the laws of our own souls, and by the laws of the universe.

If these views are right, then the directions given by the apostle in the words before us have a force and pertinancy far beyond what we may have imagined. For the qualities which he names become ideals after which character is to be developed, and like all ideals, when

once chosen, as has just been shown, they help to secure their own realization. Things true, things honorable, things just, things pure, things lovely, things of good report, taken into the mind, and brooded over and admired, set in motion the influences which go to make one true and honorable and just and pure and lovely and of good reputation. Taken up and sincerely cherished, they open in the soul like fountains to water the whole being. They shine out in the face in reflections of supernal glory. They creep into the moral fiber and make the whole life beautiful with their beauty, and strong with their strength.

What worthier motives are there to which men and women can yield; what loftier aims can they entertain and pursue, than those which the apostle here sets before us? To keep thinking about these things, and to keep following out these ends,—to keep these high ideals all the time before the mind as mariners keep their eyes fixed on the stars, will not be without cost. Purity, integrity, nobleness, a life in the world which is yet above the world—they all have their price. Though God works in us and with us, and worthy aspirations, like seeds in the ground at spring-time, struggle to take shape in living forms, yet not without wrestling, not without some lonely hours, not without experiences which give hint of the pangs of martyrs, will these high ideals of moral excellence get transformed into character and actually lived out before the eyes of the world. To quote once more from Wordsworth:

> "Yet cease I not to struggle, and aspire
> Heavenward; and chide the part of me that flags,
> Through sinful choice; or dread necessity
> On human nature from above imposed.
> 'Tis by comparison, an easy task

Earth to despise; but to converse with heaven,—
This is not easy; to relinquish all
We have, or hope, of happiness and joy
And stand in freedom loosened from this world,
I deem not arduous; but must needs confess
That 'tis a thing impossible to frame
Conceptions equal to the soul's desire
And the most difficult of tasks to *keep*
Heights which the soul is competent to gain."

But though it be hard, nay, though it were a thousandfold harder than it is, to hold the mind steady to high ideals, and to work along the line of these ideals till they reappear, like kernels of wheat in ripened harvests of golden grain, in types of sweet and exalted character, there is no lack of reward; for sweet and exalted character is the supreme achievement of man. High ideals realized abide immortal; and they who have thought and wrought on whatever things are true, and whatever things are honorable, and whatever things are just, and whatever things are pure, and whatever things are lovely, and whatever things are of good report, until these things have come to be a vital part of their being, may be sure of the blessing and fellowship of the God of peace forever and ever.

Suiting Life to Circumstances.

"But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length ye have revived your thought for me; wherein ye did indeed take thought, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me. Howbeit ye did well, that ye had fellowship with my affliction. And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need. Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account. But I have all things, and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things *that came* from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."—*Phil. 4: 10–18.*

XXI.

SUITING LIFE TO CIRCUMSTANCES.

In a preceding discourse, based on the closing paragraph—verses nineteen and thirty inclusive—of the second chapter of this epistle, and entitled Fellowship And Suffering, sufficient account has been taken, perhaps, of the mutual confidence and love with which Paul, their guide into the truth, and the brethren of the church at Philippi regarded each other, and of the great joy with which their attitude of considerate thoughtfulness and unremitting attention filled his heart. Much more might be said on this topic. It will be better, however, to let what is incidental pass, though the words contain so many statements which invite and almost constrain comment, and go straight to the main thought of the passage which is: *Suiting Life to Circumstances.*

"Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content, I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound; in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want. I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

This is a high achievement—whatever the circumstances, to suit life to them, and to be content.

A cherished English writer has said, that "Contentment produces, in some measure, all those effects which the alchemist usually ascribes to the philosopher's stone;

and, if it does not bring riches, it does the same thing by banishing the desire for them."

An American writer, in no sense less discriminating has remarked: "By the art of navigation, with great pains and industry, men fetch in the silks of Persia, the spices of Egypt, the gold of Ophir, the treasures of India. By the art of contentment a man may stay at home, and fetch in the comfort of every condition whatever. That is, he may have the comfort by contentment which he would have if he had the very things themselves."

Centuries before these writers were born, the apostle Paul had caught the secret—so rare and precious—of the satisfaction to be found in a contented spirit. It would be only the simple truth to say his contentment was ideal. He had learned the lesson of contentment so completely,—he had come into such absolute sympathy with the Hand which guided him, and into such confidence in the Wisdom which appointed his lot, that he was content wherever he was. He fell into ready acquiescence with his circumstances. He wasted no energy in fretting and chafing because things did not go more to his own liking. He was not all the time propounding riddles to his own heart, and filling his brain with dismal wonderings why providence did not have a different shaping. The ear of the world was neither vexed nor moved to compassion by groans falling from his lips. He was content. If he abounded he was content. If he was straitened and pressed to the point of want he was still content. Wherever he was, whatever his condition and surroundings, he was content.

The explanation is simple.

He was content because his life was ensphered in the life of God. He was content because all his old heavy

burden of guilt had been rolled off his soul. He was content because as he stood front to front with eternity he could feel that the opening of the gates of the world to come would bring him only new light and peace and joy. He was content because he knew that his life, and all the interests of his life, were in the keeping of One who loves and cares for His own with an infinite fulness of affection. He was content because it was clear to him that somehow the whole business fell into the plan of God, and that though his feet were in shackles, and serious limitations were imposed on his movements, and he could no longer range abroad at will, God could make use of whatever energy and influence and experience he might possess for the furtherance of the Kingdom. He was content because his mind was stayed on the Lord. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

Take a man of Paul's prodigious energy, and resolute temper, and aggressiveness of purpose, but who yet lacks his Christian spirit, and his intelligent and unfaltering trust in God, and shut him up in a prison, and say to him that all his most cherished plans and aims must be given up, and he will rage and storm like a caged lion. With what fury our imprisoned anarchists dashed their heads against the bars of the jail that held them.

There was nothing of this in Paul. Recall once more that he was in captivity at Rome. When this letter was written he had probably been in the custody of the Roman authorities considerably more than a year. At first held in a kind of mild restraint, his bonds gradually became heavier, and his treatment increasingly severe. It was not until he had passed over into the harder

phase of his imprisonment that he gave expression to the sublime words of trust and resignation and joy we have before us

Substantial tokens of regard, as we have seen, had been laid at his feet, and he was assured anew of the sympathy and prayers and practical fellowship of these far-away disciples at Philippi, he was yet held in durance, watched and guarded by a military police, with a lot made all the time more and more irksome, and with the question still an unsettled one whether the issue of his trouble would be liberation or death. The chains were becoming closer and closer about his weary limbs. Advanced in life, worn and feeble in body, his circumstances seemed all to be pointed with affliction. There were apparently a hundred things to vex him to one to give him consolation. It is hard to think of a position more likely to take all heart out of one, and make him restless and possibly bitter.

But in the midst of it all this man was uncomplaining, acquiescent, quiet. In the midst of it all he could sit and sing his song of triumphant trust, even as he and Silas had once lifted up their voices in confidence and praise at midnight in the prison at Philippi. He was burdened—over-burdened—as we should say, but he was yet cheerful. He was pushed to what some men would call the hardest extremities; but no murmurs escaped his lips. He was contented and even joyous.

Writers on this subject have called attention to the marked contrast between Paul and others—not disciples of our Lord, but distinguished in statesmanship and literature and philosophy—who have been placed in circumstances similar to Paul's at Rome.

Cicero knew the experiences of exile. It was the

most comfortable sort of exile. He was not imprisoned. He could choose his own home. He was surrounded wherever he went with wealth, luxury, admiration, and troops of friends. He knew that eminent men were using their influence in his behalf. But, philosopher though he was, and though he had written volumes of lofty exhortation to courage and fortitude and manliness, his letters composed while he was in his enforced retreat, were made up of puerile and miserable lamentations. He was anything but heroic.

Seneca was a contemporary of Paul. It has been suggested that these two men might have seen each other. He was immensely rich, high in rank, of great reputation, and there would seem to have been nothing wanting to his comfort. Some of his books are immortal. He magnified Stoic endurance, and Stoic superiority to passion and pain. But no sooner was he forced to press to his lips the cup of exile than he broke out into abject complaints. In spite of his Stoicism he was not ashamed to grovel with extravagant flatteries at the feet of a worthless freedman to induce him to procure his return from Sardinia to Rome.

How above all this was Paul. He did not, like Cicero, weary friends with unmanly murmurings and importunities. He did not, like Seneca, fawn upon the worthless, and beg for help. Poor, imprisoned, with the frown of a heartless tyrant bent on him, and with death soon to claim all that was mortal of him for the grave, his soul yet swelled with the notes, not merely of resignation, calm and sweet, but of a high and triumphant joy. He was superior to untowardness of circumstance.

He was superior, because it was not circumstances which brought him contentment; he was contented in

spite of circumstances. It was not abundance of material things; he knew how to be content though reduced to the point where he had nothing.

It is a high art—this art of contentment. A great many people know how to sow and to reap and to gather into barns; but they do not know how to be contented with their harvests. They know how to toil with their might, how to plan, how to organize success, and work up to wealth and place and power; but they do not know how to walk in the serenity of well-poised and unburdened souls. They know how to build houses, and to lay their floors ankle-deep in velvety softness, and to tax upholsterers to the utmost that room may vie with room in dainty or dazzling elegance, and to hang their walls with the rarest pictures money can buy; but after they have got their houses built and furnished they do not know how to settle back into them and get any satisfaction out of them. They have all that architects and artists and decorators and weavers and cabinet makers can do for them, but still they are without the choice blessing of contentment.

With large numbers of people it is impatience and murmur and fret and scowl all the time. Life flows on with them like a stream which has been over-fed at its sources, and has swollen beyond the capacity of its banks, and with noise and fury and wild, restless force is rushing on bearing everything before it, in destructive flood; and not like a soft, gentle brooklet, that winds on through the meadows, and seems to take delight in its grassy margin, and to catch and hold the shadow of every nodding flower, as if it was a thing of life as well as beauty, and to linger in pools or ripple over pebbles in play with the sunshine. It is almost like setting foot

in another and higher sphere to drop down into the presence of one of these habitually contented souls. They are the instruments which always have music in them. They are the priests who pronounce benedictions without waiting to be ordained.

In attempting, however, to cultivate the spirit of contentment as illustrated in the example of Paul we must be on our guard at two or three important points.

1. *We must not confound contentment with satisfaction in our own spiritual condition and attainments.*

To do this would be to expose ourselves to the charge of insufferable pride or insufferable stupidity. Men never reach the point where they cannot gain some new knowledge of themselves, and enter into deeper experiences of the love of God, and take on more of likeness to Christ. Men cannot be put into such straitness, cannot be so hampered and limited by adverse circumstances, that it is no longer possible for them to advance in the comprehension and mastery of truth, and to come more completely under the power of the things invisible and eternal. Worlds on worlds of light and purity are yet before us.

The apostle said: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." He also said: "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do,—forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He was content, but it was not the serenity of self-conceit. He was content, but his content was not stagnation. He was content, but contentment as he estimated and experienced it was not inconsistent with endeavors to keep his body under, and

to overcome every easily besetting sin, and to grow into the largest proportions of moral and spiritual manhood. "Whether by life or by death," so he says, he wanted Christ "magnified in his body." It would be a poor miserable contentment in which a man should see nothing in his own thought or life to be amended, and nothing new and higher to be achieved.

2. *Hence contentment must not be confounded with a lack of wholesome aspiration.*

A man isn't a man in the best sense of the term who has in his soul no kindling desires, no eager outreachings, after something not yet attained. What realms there are of knowledge and truth and virtue, which, so far as we are concerned, are still unoccupied. Our feet have never trodden them, or, if they have, they have never trodden them to conquer, and bear away splendid trophies. It is only a mockery of his own best instincts, —it is an insult to his own rational faculties, for a man to stand face to face with paths which open out from his feet into the illimitable expanses of light and purity,— to stand with eye catching the signals of hands beckoning from immortal heights,—to stand with ear saluted by the stern and yet benignant voice of duty, calling him for the sake of the Kingdom, and for the sake of humanity, to move onward, and say in response he is content with himself as he is.

There is an ignoble content as well as an ignoble discontent.

How sick it makes one to listen to some of the complaints foolish people are all the time pouring forth. It is not with themselves in the best sense, nor with their attitude toward God, nor with their achievements, and the way in which they have used time and opportunity,

and all the higher gifts and privileges of life. It is some matter of the outside of life. It is some physical infelicity. It is some unfortunate environment of life. It is the house, the furniture, the help, the limitations birth has seemed to impose. It is the struggle and expense involved in keeping up with somebody else in fashion. There are men and women, by the hundreds, all about us, who are full of discontent, and who, on every occasion, whether suitable or unsuitable, are bewailing their lot because there are other men and women who can outshine them socially, and who get invitations to places where their names are never mentioned. Cannot anybody see that this is an ignoble discontent? In presence of such facts is it not sometimes hard to maintain our respect for human nature?

Just so there is an ignoble content. It is when a man rests satisfied in himself, and feels no throbbings of soul for a purer and loftier life, and God's pleadings to come nearer to Him, and to get into fuller fellowship with His thought and aim, awaken no affirmative responses in his nature. It is when a man falls back into the lap of self-indulgence or ease or wealth, and ceases to struggle any more to be inwardly clean and large and strong.

Why not strive for the nobler quests? Why not arouse the soul to dissatisfaction with its own mental and moral littleness? Why not make it a point of ambition to shine in those higher spheres where darkness is to be conquered, and vice is to be overcome, and wretchedness is to be relieved, and laws and institutions are to be improved, and society is to be delivered from some threatening evil, and humanity is to be carried forward toward its final redemption?

For a man to fall under the sway and habit of these

little discontents is to vulgarize his nature, and throw obstacles in the path of his own mental and moral progress. For a man to feel this larger, worthier discontent is to gladden angels.

Get at the kind of discontent a man feels, and you get at the measure of the man. When a man or woman is constantly fretting over some petty annoyance, is thinking always of some petty comfort, or some petty success, it tells the whole story of the inner life. It tells the whole story because it tells not only what one is, but what one wants to be.

Paul's kind of content admits of a great deal of discontent, if only the discontent be of the high and worthy sort. Looking at his scant possessions, looking at the few friends who rallied about him at the hour when he needed friends, looking at his watchful keeper, looking at his chains, looking at his prison walls, looking at the near prospect of death, he said: "I am content." Looking at Jesus, looking at the character Jesus helps men to achieve, looking as with vision anointed at the glories which sometimes break through the upper world and illuminate our earthly horizon, he said: "No, I am not content; I want more likeness to the Son of God, and more fitness for the crown He is by and by to give me to wear."

3. *Contentment must not be confounded with failure or indisposition to act up to the full measure of capacity and opportunity for the bringing about of good ends.*

Contentment is not laziness. It is not the man who sits down in the sun and folds his hands, and says he is going to let the world move on as it will, who shows us what true Christian contentment is. It is not over

against industry, nor zeal, nor even the intensest activity in spheres where light can be carried, and justice can be set up, and love shown, that we put contentment.

Industry promotes contentment. If a good many of these howling socialists who think they have a serious grievance against society would only stop talking, or whiskey-selling, and go to work at some remunerative and reputable employment, bloated capitalists and merchants and manufacturers would not seem half so offensive in their sight. The kind of contentment which takes no interest in anything, is the contentment of the stalled ox, or the gorged Indian lying in his tepee.

If doing nothing were a proof of contentment, then Paul never knew a contented hour. If passionate eagerness to bring ends to pass, and the calling into activity of all energies, mental, moral, social, spiritual, which one has in command, that these ends may be secured, be inconsistent with contentment, Paul was but dreaming when he spoke of his inward peace, and of his serene acquiescence in the circumstances of his lot.

In his imprisonment the apostle was still busy. The Christian Church is indebted to these months when he was chained by the wrist to a soldier, for four of his most wonderful epistles,—this to the Philippians, the one to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians. What a gap it would leave in our New Testament to take these letters out of the Canon.

But in these letters observe what eager watchfulness there is for the welfare of the churches, what tender solicitude for individuals, what arguments and appeals are presented to stir Christian sensibilities and deepen Christian convictions and promote Christian steadfastness.

What prayers for the comfort of the Spirit to be vouchsafed to the brethren to whom he writes, and for their growth in grace and knowledge. "For God is my witness how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus." Not only did he long after them; but both God and men were witnesses to the fidelity with which he wrought for them, and to the sufferings which he endured for them in Christ Jesus, his Lord and our Lord.

Paul was content; but it was not the content of indifference. Content, but he was warmly concerned in his fellow-men. He was content; but he did not on that account cease to take interest in the practical business of securing faith and righteousness among men. Indeed it is this which so largely uncovers the secret of the contentment of the apostle. For there is nothing like absorption in a great interest to withdraw thought from petty aims and anxieties, and to lift one to the high plane where the atmosphere is tonic, and it is possible to walk in the fellowship of God.

To gather up our ideas, then, into one bundle, is it not clear that a man can be contented, and yet not be satisfied with his own purity of heart and with his own attainments? Contented, and yet not be satisfied unless his soul is all the time on the stretch for loftier ends than any hitherto gained? Contented, and yet not be satisfied unless he is doing some sort of helpful thing all the time, and the life is flowing along in the channels which have been divinely opened for it?

True contentment lies in a wholesome superiority to the mere circumstances of life. Outward conditions independent of inward states, have but small influence in imparting rest and joy. Outward conditions, too,

independent of inward states, have but small power to disturb rest and joy. It was not the indifference of Stoicism; it was not the high defiance of a wounded but unconquerable pride; it was the sublime superiority to whatever is material into which one is lifted when his life has become identified with the life of the Son of God, which enabled the apostle to say: "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know how to be abased; and I know also how to abound; in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want." Observe he has "*learned*" it. It was not something which was in him by nature. It was not something which came to him without effort. It was a mystery which had to be unfolded to him. It was a secret into which he had to be initiated. He "*learned*" it.

How did Paul learn this lesson? in what school? at the feet of what master? Through what process and by what aid did he achieve a triumph so remarkable over himself and over the world? Hint of the answer has just been given in the words concerning the identification of his life with the life of the Son of God.

But let him make his own reply, and give his own explanation: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." The secret of his brave endurance on the one hand, and of his superiority to temptation on the other—was not in himself, it was in Christ. This is why he was able to abound without over-elation or conceit; and it was why he was able to endure straitness and want without any murmuring or bitterness,—it was the enabling he received from Christ. In a previous paragraph of this epistle Paul has said: "To me to live

is Christ." The present statement is a natural inference from that; for, living Christ, he had the grace and wisdom and energy of Christ to carry him through his tasks and trials. It was not in any superior capability or force of his own that he was master of the situation, but through the indwelling Christ. Had he had the rashness to suppose that he was equal to all demands made upon him without any divine aid he would have come to grief. Or had he been so distrustful as not to believe the grace of God sufficient for him he would have accomplished nothing. But in the Lord strengthening him he could do all things. Were one to say: "I can do all things," and stop there, we should call him either a fool or a fanatic; but when he goes on and says: "I can do all things *in Him that strengtheneth me*,"—"all things" *in Christ*, we recognize the reasonableness of it. Christ has the strength to impart to men to make them sufficient both for their duties and their burdens; and He both knows how and is willing to impart this strength. Whoever trusts Him, whoever loves Him, whoever obeys Him, whoever is in a condition to say that for him to live is Christ, is open to this strength. Christ strengthens us by delivering our souls from a sense of guilt which is the most weakening element in our nature; by quickening and illuminating our mental faculties; by filling our minds with the great hope of a blessed immortality; by the inner girding of His Spirit; and by bringing us more and more under the power and into the fellowship of spiritual realities.

Vital connection with Christ, however, conditions the strengthening. Without this there is no heroic doing and enduring. Theodore Cuyler says that when he was

in Princeton "Professor Henry had so constructed a large bar of iron, bent into the form of a horseshoe, that it used to hang suspended from another iron bar above it. Not only did it hang there, but it upheld four thousand pounds weight attached to it. The horseshoe magnet was not welded or glued to the metal above it, but through the iron wire coiled round it there ran a subtle current of electricity from a galvanic battery. Stop the flow of the current for an instant and the huge horseshoe dropped. So does all the lifting power of the Christian come from the currents of spiritual influence which flow into his heart from the living Christ. The strength of the Almighty One enters into the believer. If his connection with Christ is cut off, in an instant he becomes another man. He can no longer 'do all things.'"

What a pity it is that we cannot all of us come into the sweet secret and habit of suiting our lives in this way to circumstances. How much better it would be to take just what God, in answer to our wisest plannings and industry and prayers, sees good to send us, and rest in it, than to be all the time worrying our own souls, and making the world about us miserable with our discontents. How much better to submit uncomplainingly to our misfortunes and chastisements in the sublime confidence that God does make all things to work together for good for those that love Him, than to be nursing thoughts of how hard the way is made to us, and burdening the air with our ungracious wailings.

> "Neither too lofty nor too low;
> This, this is all my choice, my cheer—
> A mind content, a conscience clear."

Fulness of Supply in God.

"And my God shall fulfil every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now unto our God and Father *be* the glory for ever and ever. Amen."—*Phil. 4: 19–20.*

XXII.

FULNESS OF SUPPLY IN GOD.

There are many precious passages in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians. Few can be more assuring and comforting to a disciple of our Lord, and especially to a disciple whose temperament is not of the over-sanguine sort, and whose outlook on life is anything but cheery, than the one now in hand for consideration. The thought which it presses home upon us, and which it may well be a delight for us to dwell upon is: *Fulness of Supply in God.*

The steps by which Paul was led up to this thought were simple and natural.

As we have seen he had been in the straits of deep need. Imprisoned, deprived of the opportunity of earning anything to meet his necessities by the labor of his own hands, at a distance from the friends who knew him most intimately and loved him most warmly, and without earthly resources to draw upon, he had been forced to suffer want. Not that he was not content, and not that he would not have been content even in the most distressing poverty he might have experienced; for he had learned in whatsoever state he might be, and without a murmur, to suit his life to the circumstances Providence had arranged for him. All the same he had been in want. He was empty. Through the thoughtfulness and generosity of his Philippian brethren his wants had been bountifully met. He had been filled. "But I

have all things and abound; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

This thought of the fulness with which he had been filled led him to think of the divine fulness and of the means God has at His disposal for supplying all depths of need and repaying all acts of kindness. In their Christlike love these disciples had filled him till he abounded. No way was open to him for making any adequate return in kind. But God—his God and their God—they might be sure would not overlook nor neglect them. Through the tender love God had inspired in their hearts for him, he had been taken care of. In any exigency of need into which they might fall, God would be sure to come to their relief.

"And my God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

In proceeding now to a somewhat sharper and more orderly study of the fulness of supply which true disciples of our Lord find in God, occasion will be discovered for looking at the subject from two different points of view.

1. *The first is the point of view of need.*

"And my God shall fulfil every need of yours."

In looking at men in the mass the leading fact to make impression on the mind is that of need. It would be difficult to come upon a person who is not in some kind of need. The infant of days has his needs. The patriarch of years has his needs. All through from cradle to grave,—through the period of childhood and youth, through the period of highest activity and power, it is a story of need. We have our common needs,—our needs

in which we all share alike; and we have our individual needs,—or needs which, in addition to those that are common to all, are peculiar to each man and woman. The amount of need under which humanity labors and struggles is simply measureless; for it is need here and need there and need everywhere.

The disciple of Jesus Christ, in that he is still a man among men and is of the earth earthy, participates in these needs. Some of his needs,—the greatest of his needs, indeed, since by faith in the Son of God he has been delivered from the defilement and guilt and bondage of sin and restored to the approval of the Father—have been met. But he is still subject to hunger and cold and nakedness; is still exposed to temptations; still requires fellowship and sympathy; still depends on the Spirit for guidance and strength.

The apostle, it is to be observed, does not hesitate to include the whole sweep of the disciple's need in his statement. It is a large contract into which he enters; but he accepts it and subscribes to it with his own hand. The language is—"*every need.*" It is not our physical needs alone; nor our intellectual needs alone; nor our social needs alone; nor our spiritual needs alone,—it is all our needs. The particular needs which were pressing upon Paul at the stage of his experience when the messenger from Philippi reached him with his evidences of good-will were these two,—the need of something to relieve his material distresses and ameliorate his bodily condition, and the need of Christian sympathy. His heart craved a token of brotherly love. For some reason those about him did not meet the requirements of the situation, and he longed for his old friends. But when he lifted his eye to God and rounded out his thought

and gave it utterance he took in everything. "And my God shall fulfil *every need* of yours." These fellow-disciples to whom he wrote were not to pick out one thing and say: "Now I may ask God for aid in this particular, but not in others"; or another thing and say, "If is fit for me to make my desires known to God with respect to this want, but not with respect to other wants." He simply took them all in and said with an emphasis not to be mistaken—"*every need.*"

It is not to be inferred from this that the apostle falls into the mistake of identifying our needs with our wishes and desires—our needs with our conceits and our earthly ambitions and aims—our needs and what we often foolishly fancy it would be good for us to have. Men often want things which they do not need. Men often want things it is a thousand times better for them not to have. So, too, men do not want things, and shrink from receiving things, which as a matter of fact they especially need. Paul prayed repeatedly and with all earnestness to be delivered from the thorn in the flesh. He did not want it. He did not want the trouble of it, nor the pain of it, nor, it may be, the humiliation of it. But God saw he needed it, and so He did not grant the relief for which supplications were made. Job needed the experience through which he passed that he might bear effective witness to the righteousness of God. It was not pleasant, but was needful. It was a sad and painful preliminary training, but Joseph needed to be sold into Egypt and pass through what he did in order to become the stepping stone of his people to higher things.

Nor is it to be inferred from this that men are not to do the best they can to meet their own needs. No man

may say: "Here is an assurance that my Heavenly Father has me in His watchful care, and will see to it that all the pressing necessities of my life are met: there is, therefore, no call for exertion and foresight on my part; and so I will just fold my hands and sit still and wait for Him to do it all." This would be the rankest fanaticism. Men must plan for their own welfare. They must use their brains, and their muscles and their opportunities. But after all is said and done there will still be much pressing on men to which they are not equal. After all is said and done there may still be needs right in the line of their most strenuous endeavors and their most careful forecasting of the future. What the apostle affirms is that God holds all the needs of all His children in mind, and that those who love Him and trust Him have no reason for giving way to dark and dreary forebodings about the future. "And my God shall fufil every need of yours."

2. *Pass now from the point of view of the need to the point of view of the supply:*

"And my God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Jesus Christ."

It is not quite easy to settle exactly what the apostle means by the phrase: "His riches in glory." When the words are taken by themselves we know what "His riches" mean. It is the vast wealth of the universe—material, moral, spiritual—these mighty outlying and incomprehensible possessions, which He holds in His divine keeping. We know what "glory" when used in association with the Word of God means. It is the honor He receives through the manifestation of His true nature in word and work, and the matchless exexaltation in which he resides. But "His riches in

glory," "according to His riches in glory," does not yield its thought quite so freely and clearly as might be desired. In the hands of the masters of exegesis the language seems to have sometimes one and sometimes another shade of significance.

Not without having spent some time in a careful examination of their conclusions, but without lingering to reproduce the reasons set forth for their opinions by the earnest scholars who have given attention to this epistle, it is evident to me that the writers are wrong who deny this meeting of need to the present, and project the fulfilment or satisfaction of the assurance out into the future. This view is not in keeping with the context and the demands of the situation.

Paul's need was a need of the here and now. He needed relief for his physical straitness and distress. He needed expressions of love and sympathy. He needed divine grace to enable him to adjust himself uncomplainingly to his hard condition. He needed the constant presence and fellowship of Jesus Christ. All these things he had. They came to him from God. Human hearts and human hands were engaged in the ministry; but behind the hearts and the hands was God. The gifts and the love which prompted the gifts were of God. They were an odor of a sweet smell; they were an acceptable sacrifice; they were well-pleasing to God. These tokens of affection and care came to Paul because Paul was God's servant, and God was looking out for him, and through chosen agents contributing to his necessities. Thinking of it with glowing interest, writing of it with an enthusiastic pen the apostle turned about and said—giving to his words a free rendering—and said: "Now this God of mine—the God whom I love and serve,

is your God. Through the considerate thoughtfulness which He has stirred in your souls He has taken care of me; but He will be just as forward to take care of you. You have needs, just as I have needs—partly the same as mine, but partly different from mine and peculiar to yourselves, but there is not one of them which will not fall under the watchful eye of the Father in heaven, and not one of them for which He will not make some sort of suitable provision. According to the same infinitude of resource, and the same glorious measure of love, which He exhibited in the gift of Jesus Christ, will God make His interest in you manifest. He will fulfil every need of yours."

This assurance of Paul reaches out into the future. It will find its highest consummation in the future. But to limit it to the future; to admit that the "needs" are all the needs which men can feel and know "every need"—physical, mental, moral, social, spiritual alike, and then to affirm that the aid promised has reference only to some future reward, that the hardships and pains and sufferings of true disciples are to find their recompense only in the glory of the unseen world, is to shut one's eyes to the circumstances of the case and stultify the whole sublime story. Paul meant to say, that out of His inexhaustible riches, after the large and glorious manner which characterized all His doings, and with the wealth of saving energy with which He comes into the world in Christ, God would regard these brethren, and see to it that no real need of theirs was even overlooked or disregarded.

Now it belongs to the highest and most precious of all our privileges to fall back on this assurance the apostle has given us, and to live in the reality and sacredness of

it. In a world where there are foes within and foes without to be encountered; where there are turnings and overturnings of conditions, and it is prosperity one day and adversity the next; where opposition from unexpected quarters, or sickness and death may change the whole outlook of one's affairs in a day, this assurance is an important part of every Christian's working capital. Not often, it may be, do God's children reach the point where they need bread and clothing and shelter; but they always need more light, more faith, more patience, more love, more dutifulness; and in God there is fulness of supply. Why is it that there is not a readier turning to Him for grace?

The late Dr. Richard Newton who had such marvelous skill in gathering up striking incidents and anecdotes to illustrate Christian truth has left on record a story in point. It concerns an old and poverty smitten Indian who many years ago found his way into one of our western settlements in search of food to keep him from starving. "A bright colored ribbon was seen round his neck, from which there hung a small dirty pouch. On being asked what it was, he said it was a charm given him in his younger days. He opened it and took out a worn and crumpled paper, which he handed the person speaking to him for inspection. It proved, on examination, to be a regular discharge from the Federal army, entitling him to a pension for life, and signed by General Washington himself. Here was a man with a promise duly signed, which, if presented in the right place, would have secured to him ample provision for the way; and yet he was wandering about hungry, helpless and forlorn, and begging for bread to keep him from starving. What a picture we have here of many Chris-

tians, who, with all the promises of Jesus in their hands, with the charter of their inheritance in full possession, are yet gloomy and sad, and starving in the wilderness."

When will the fact of the infinite fulness of supply there is in God be permitted to take possession of us and become the basis of our activity and hope and life? Can God tell us any more plainly than He has told us that His resources are open to our use? Can He make it more evident than He has made it that He is ready to put His vast stores of grace—His wisdom and strength —and what is far better than all this—is ready to put Himself at our free service?

How the Psalms brim with this assurance of God's nearness to His people, and of the minute way in which He watches over their interests, and of His disposition to guard them from harm, and to come to their rescue in the sharp and bitter experiences of life. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." The thought of Jesus moves in the same comforting groove. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." The expectations the apostle created in the minds of the Philippians by certifying to them God's readiness to supply their needs is in line with the whole trend of Scripture.

The difficulty, or one of the difficulties, is that men are not satisfied to have their present needs met, nor even to have the assurance made to them that their

future needs will be met; but they want some tangible evidence, some weighable, material proof, like a well-established and prosperous business, or an abundantly secured investment, or a good solid bank account, that what is promised will be done. Paul might have written to these Philippian brethren: "Oh, yes; God through you has brought me supplies for my present necessities; through you He has cheered my heart with expressions of love and sympathy for the immediate occasion; and through you He has made these passing hours comfortable—or if not comfortable, endurable; but how will it be to-morrow and to-morrow?" But he did not write any such thing. The word he wrote for substance was that what God had done was just like Him, and that He could be depended upon to act in this way every time. "My God, the God whom I trust, the God who has called me into His service, the God who has come to me with relief in this present exigency, is a God who will never fail to send His love and His ministries of grace and His providencies to the needs of those who confide in Him and try to follow Him." This was the strain in which the apostle wrote.

But if men expect that God is going to anticipate their needs before they themselves come to them and feel them; if they are going to refuse to trust Him unless they can see great piles of bread heaped up before they are hungry, and stacks of clothing before they are naked, and houses to dwell in before they are under the necessity of occupying them, and sympathy for them in their imprisonment before they are imprisoned, they will be disappointed. God has not promised to run on before us and see to it that we do not have any needs,—He is too wise to adopt such a method; but simply to

meet our needs when they arise and the pressure of them is experienced. God is a skilful engineer; He knows how to build bridges, and He can build them with a miraculous facility; but ordinarily He does not construct them till His people reach the stream and it is a necessity for them to cross. He parts the waters of the Red Sea when the children of Israel get there and stand on the shore, and the depths are in front of them and the Egyptians are behind them. It was when Peter found himself sinking and in his fear he cried unto the Lord to save him, that Jesus stretched forth His hand and rescued him from the peril of winds and waves, and from the peril of too little faith as well. It is ours to get out of the promises all that God has put into them; but we are to be careful not to revise them and inject into them features and elements quite foreign to the divine thought. In His own wise time, and in His own loving way God will supply every need of those who seek to know and do His will; but that He will keep them from feeling any sense of need, will withhold from them the benefits of the wholesome discipline of need, is more than the occasion contemplates. The needs, however, as they arise one by one will be met and they will be met after the large pattern, or according to the riches of God in glory in Jesus Christ.

Well might the apostle round out this great assurance with the glowing and jubilant words of doxology and say: "Now unto our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

The Saints of Cæsar's Household.

"Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me salute you. All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Cæsar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."—*Phil 4: 21–23.*

XXIII.

THE SAINTS OF CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD.

It is with a sense of satisfaction, such as any person is likely to feel when about to finish a task long in hand, and yet not without the regret experienced when a service has been found to be agreeable and rewarding, and one has become accustomed to it, that we reach the closing words of this epistle to the Philippians. The present discourse concludes our series. But even this long continued and consecutive study of the letter has not exhausted—in the estimation of men of extraordinary gifts and profound spiritual insight would be thought, no doubt, only to have hinted at—the vast wealth of light and love and motive force which Paul put into it. The longer, indeed, one lingers over these words, the more patiently and earnestly one tries to master the significance they contain, the more wonderful will they seem, the more evident will it be that they are penetrated to a degree which only a high measure of inspiration can explain with the truth and life of our Lord, and the firmer will be the hold they will take on the heart and conscience, and the more intense and enthusiastic will be the desire to have in one the mind of Christ.

The theme for this last sermon is: *The Saints of Cæsar's Household.*

As the apostle begins his letter with the words addressed directly "to the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi," and with wishing them "grace" and

"peace" from God the Father and from our Lord; so he ends it with words of salutation and benediction. The warm personal interest and tender fellowship and earnest desire for the spiritual welfare of these Philippian brethren manifested at the outset of the epistle reappear in the kindly farewell greetings and the prayer for divine blessings on them at the close. "Salute every saint in Christ Jesus." Or, what comes to the same thing: "Express the heartiest good will to every member—not to one or two or a half dozen—but to each and every member of your body of believers."

"The brethren which are with me salute you." The "brethren" were disciples, doubtless, who for some reason stood in closer personal relation to Paul than the majority of the fellowship at Rome; and yet they are not to be too sharply distinguished from the other "saints." The reference may be to "official colleagues," if there were any such colleagues, like Timothy and Mark; or to "traveling companions," like Luke and Silas; or to "prominent believers" who resided in the city, like Clement and Linus. Whoever they were these individuals wished to have their sentiments of regard specially expressed.

"All the saints salute you." Not Paul alone; nor Paul and these brethren alone; but "all the saints"—the whole communion—join in the communication of good will and assurance of a true brotherly interest and sympathy.

But here falls in a clause whose presence is peculiar and also profoundly significant. "All the saints salute you, *especially they that are of Cæsar's household.*"

Who are these "saints" of "Cæsar's household?" How has it come to pass that there are "saints" in

"Cæsar's household?" Through what agency, by what process has the saving knowledge of the truth of Jesus Christ found its way into the imperial circle?

The answer is twofold. There was a church at Rome for a considerable period before the great apostle to the Gentiles had passed through the gates of the Eternal City and wore the humiliating badges of her sovereignty on his fettered wrists. Three years at least before walking along the Appian Way, and meeting the brethren at "The Market," he had written his great letter to these disciples in Rome.

Beyond any question some of the persons who were members of the church at Rome belonged to the household of the Emperor. Bishop Lightfoot in an essay on this passage which must have cost him much careful investigation and study, and which is exceedingly interesting and instructive, has pointed out the fact that many of the names mentioned by Paul in the last chapter of his letter to the Romans are identical with the names found in sepulchral inscriptions and known to have had a place in the imperial household. Of these he specifies Ampliatus, Urbanus, Apelles, Stachys, the two women Tryphæna and Tryphosa, Rufus and Hermes, with a number of others. These were early converts to the faith; and though there may be mistakes in particular instances of identification, some at least of the individuals here indicated must have had a position in Cæsar's household as well as in Christ's Church.

But the preaching of Paul was also effective in winning inmates of the household of Cæsar to the faith. The soldiers who in turn were charged with the duty of guarding a prisoner who, to say the least, must have seemed to them so remarkable in his views and charac-

ter, were gently constrained to hear the story of salvation through a crucified and risen Christ which he had to tell. "The things which happened" to him aided in "the progress of the Gospel"; and he had not been in Rome very long before his "bonds became manifest in Christ through the whole prætorian guard,"—or rather perhaps, "in the whole prætorium." His ministry was fruitful in spiritual results. Through these soldiers as well as through earlier disciples, the influence of the apostle found ready way into the circles of the imperial household.

This is why there came to be disciples of our Lord in the household of Cæsar.

Not with this simple explanation of the fact, however, are we to stop. For some of the most instructive, some of the most encouraging, and some of the profoundest lessons, which the history of the triumphs of the Cross has to unfold lie right here. In this little clause of a single brief sentence, there are whole volumes of practical inference.

I. *The first lesson is that it is possible to be a witness for Christ and to do effective work for Christ in almost any situation in which one may be placed.*

Paul was in bonds. He was permitted considerable liberty, especially in the earlier stages of his imprisonment; but he was never allowed to go abroad without the chain which held him to his guard. His circumstances were such as in the estimation of many would have justified him in keeping still. Possibly the charges under which he had been arrested and through his own appeal brought to Rome could be more easily set aside were he to hold his peace and behave himself after a self-contained and circumspect fashion. One has no

difficulty in imagining such counsel may have fallen on his ear. In the interest, not alone of his life, but of his future usefulness, this sort of advice might have been whispered to him more than once.

But instead of falling in with the suggestions of worldly prudence, and waiting for what would appear to some a safer hour, he began at once to tell his wonderful story. In his imprisonment, and in the new relations into which his imprisonment brought him to certain classes of men and to certain phases of society, he saw one of the finest opportunities he had ever had for preaching the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, and he seized and used it. When Paul was set upon and arrested and held for trial it looked as if his ministry had been brought to a sudden termination. So far from this being true God was opening to him a field for his special activity, and he had both the mind and the heart, both the courage and the desire, to do what providence indicated. With tongue and pen he proclaimed the message of the love of God in Christ.

There are two ways in particular in which the apostle commended the religion of Christ to those who were about him.

The first was the sweet patience with which he bore his burdens and passed through whatever sufferings his imprisonment forced him to endure. These people from lowest to highest were quite familiar with Stoic hardness and indifference; but to be joyful under limitations and pain was something new to them. Meeting and bearing reverses, not in a spirit of despair on the one hand, nor of wild bravado on the other, but in the conviction that there is a divine ministry for the soul in sorrow, was a fresh disclosure to the capabilities into

which men can be trained by the help of the Spirit and by the hope of glory.

The other way was by the word of mouth, through which, no doubt, as often as he had the ear of an attendant, or of any chance hearer, he enthusiastically unfolded the plan of redemption, and told of One who had come down from God out of heaven that He might illustrate to us the fulness of the divine love, and bear our sins in His own body, and die for us on the Cross of Calvary. By the words he spoke Paul explained his own character; and in his character he exemplified his words; and through the joint effect of the two,--the truth he uttered and the truth he lived—he made a deep impression for Christ.

Thus what seems to be a hindrance to a person's activity and usefulness is often a help. Very frequently we say the door is shut when God is saying the door is open. The young man thrown by the demand of business into the midst of a tough and ungodly crowd; the young woman who is called to move her round in a thoughtless and giddy circle; the soldier, the sailor, the clerk, the mechanic, the laborer, forced into association with people who are without faith and the loyalty to truth and virtue which are the fruits of faith, often feels that nothing worth while can be done in the circumstances for Christ. Not so felt Paul at Rome. A prisoner, chained to his guard, limited in his coming and going, confined in his intercourse to those who sought him or who were thrown in his way, intrigued against by his own race, regarded, sometimes, it may be, with a sort of amiable amusement, but generally with contempt by those who occupied the seats of learning and power, Paul yet rendered a service for Christ while at Rome so

signal and successful that the memory and influence of it will never die.

II. *A second lesson—a correlative of this first one —is that it is possible to win hearts to Christ and bring them under the renewing energy of His grace in circumstances which from a worldly stand-point would seem to put success quite out of the question.*

As the apostle witnessed for Christ and worked for Christ under conditions which ordinarily might have been expected to put the idea of witnessing and working quite out of one's mind, so he secured results and achieved marked victories for the Kingdom of righteousness in a sphere where noteworthy spiritual triumphs could hardly have been anticipated.

For what was this household of Cæsar? Who is meant by it, and how long is the list of the persons who must be included in this designation? Above all what was the office and character of these persons?

Cæsar's household was made up of a large number of persons of all ages and ranks and occupations and conditions. This household was not merely the Emperor's more immediate family group with its necessary retinue of servants; but it included the highest functionaries as well as the lowest menials; and the total enrollment of this body went up into high figures. The majority consisted of soldiers and slaves—though slaves in those days and under the Roman dominion were often men of distinction and learning,—but senators and knights—men of wealth and men of intellectual parts and men skilled in the base arts of sensuality—were likewise reckoned among those who were in waiting upon the ruler. "The affairs of government," so Dean Merivale has told us, "were transacted chiefly by the Emperor's freedmen,

some of them notorious for their riches and influence, court favorites who had been enfranchised by himself or his predecessors." It was a vast concourse of people—this which constituted the household of Cæsar, and which discharged the functions severally assigned to them.

But if the numbers of this household were great; if among them were generals and secretaries and physicians and teachers of ability and renown, as well as a vast throng of humbler servants, the most marked characteristic of the body was the appalling corruption which prevailed. Nero sat on the throne, and the tastes of the sovereign were largely the tastes of his court, and the conduct of the highest official of the nation was imitated so far as it could be by the menials who watched for his beck and nod. Murders, debaucheries, licentious intrigues, bitter cruelties, and every sort of crime and corruption characterized the court society. Perhaps there was no period in the whole history of the Roman Empire when high capacities and learning and skill and wealth were so entirely prostituted to unholy and degrading ends as when Paul was a prisoner within the walls of the city.

Yet right there in Cæsar's household under all the disadvantages of the place, and against so many alien influences, the truth made its way, and souls were persuaded to turn from sin and accept and follow Jesus Christ as their Savior. Quite likely these "saints" were not of the more eminent personages of the household. This is of little consequence; for the badge of high or low, rich or poor, cultivated or ignorant, which we fasten on men to designate their standing in our earthly society, amounts to nothing in the sight of God.

It is soulhood, and not the incidents of soulhood, which eternity notes. The essential fact is that souls were plucked as brands from the burning out of the midst of these corrupt associates.

The same thing can be done anywhere and everywhere. Men can be found of the Gospel in high places and in low places alike, because men are made for the Gospel and the Gospel is made for men. The Gospel is what all men need, and it is what all men must have if they would satisfy their needs. As has been pointed out by another, if the salvation of Jesus Christ is for Onesimus the slave, and for Peter the fisherman, it is also for Luke the physician, and for Zenas the lawyer and for Zacchæus the public official, and for Cornelius the soldier. It is for the fashionable circles and the ruling circles, and the slums of Paris and Berlin. It is for the fashionable circles and the ruling circles, and the slums of London and Washington. It is for Cæsar's household because every member of Cæsar's household from highest to lowest is a sinner, and is to be saved, if saved at all, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Winning souls to Christ in the household of Cæsar was a typical work. In my judgment the time has come when the Church ought to return to original conceptions and methods, and make efforts all along the line and score results from top to bottom of society. If the poor and lowly have seemed to accept Christianity more readily than the rich, it is not because they need it more, nor because it is more suited to their necessities. Wealth cannot wash away the guilt of the soul, and money bags will be no shield in the day of Judgment.

III. *A third lesson is that it is possible to develop a high order of Christian character under influences and in the midst of surroundings which would seem to be anything but favorable to spiritual growth.*

It would be difficult to conceive of an environment less favorable to an intelligent and successful cultivation of the graces of the Spirit,—to a putting on of Christ, and living a Christ-life in the practical affairs of every day, than this of the household of Cæsar. Men say sometimes: "Oh, we have so many hindrances; we meet with so much opposition in our efforts to follow Christ and be faithful to His precepts and example; we are so beset with temptations to turn aside and do as others do in the way of gratifying avarice or ambition or appetite, that it often seems to us of no use to try to be good and to do good." But where is one likely to encounter more difficulties in attempting to be spiritually-minded, and to walk in the faith of Christ and to pattern the life after the model of Christ, than were encountered by these disciples back there in Rome, forced as they were to breathe the atmosphere of a self-indulgent and grossly voluptuous paganism, and to discharge their duties in a court and under an administration whose corruption was rivaled only by its cruelty?

Circumstances do differ; and some circumstances are more favorable to piety, and to a rapid and symmetrical growth of Christian character than others. In some families it is a great deal easier than it is in other families to regulate the life by Christian standards, and conform to the conditions of a true spirituality. So it is in shops and stores and mills. So it is in the manufacturing establishments. There are shops and

stores and mills and factories where cheating and lying are a part of the stock in trade, and it is assumed that to be strictly honest would be to court ruin. In this kind of association, and in concerns where the leanings are toward these crooked policies, it calls for no small amount of energy and pluck to keep the soul in line with God and under direction of the Spirit. But given a Joseph, given a Daniel, given an Obadiah, given a Nehemiah, and no temptations of an Egyptian Court, or a Babylonian Court, or an Israelitish Court, or a Persian Court, will prevent the exhibition of a magnificent loyalty to God, nor stay progress in righteousness. Indeed it is often the adversity of the conditions under which it has had to come up which lends both attractiveness and power to the character.

Had "Tom Brown" of Rugby, as Hughes has told the story, not been compelled to run the gauntlet of opposition and ridicule on his kneeling down to pray, his character never would have seemed so exalted, and his career never would have taken such a hold on our hearts.

The late Dr. William M. Taylor, in addition to some things here suggested by him, but not quoted, has said: "Christianity is not a thing of locality but of character. There are plants which will bloom in some latitudes and die in others; but Christianity can live where man can live, because it consists in loyalty of heart and life to Christ." This is true. Being true this is what makes it possible for men and women, be their circumstances what they may, to rise superior to their circumstances, and exemplify the high qualities of likeness to Christ.

May it not be, in fact, that the stoutest and best Christian character is just that which grows up in hard

soil and is often blown upon by harsh winds? Were there more call in their estimation for watchfulness and courage; were there a more constant consciousness that the eyes of unsympathetic critics are on them; are there not many believers who would live more consecrated lives, and who would be more faithful to their covenant vows, and more devoted to their Christian duties? It was a hard place to be in; but these saints in Cæsar's household magnified their high calling, and rejoiced in the fellowship of believers, and did not hesitate to let it be known as far as Paul's letter could carry the intelligence, that they trusted in Christ and rejoiced in the hope of glory.

In bringing this epistle to a fit conclusion and uttering last the best and highest word he knew how to speak, Paul expressed the desire that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be communicated to these brethren at Philippi. What he uttered is not merely a kindly wish, but a high and earnest prayer. It is that their spirits might be illuminated with divine light, and girded with divine strength, and elevated into a divine fellowship. He wanted the love of Christ to overflow into their hearts, and the thought of Christ to penetrate and inform their thoughts, and the life of Christ to re-appear in their lives. This would give them confidence and cheer in hours which otherwise would be marked by despondency. This would give them consolation and comfort when waves of sorrow rolled in on the soul. This would give them sympathetic and vital connection with things invisible, and enable them the more easily to keep their minds and hearts fixed on the realities of the world to come. This would give them assurance of joys and glories such as no prophetic forecast has ever

yet reduced to the measure of human speech. It is because we do not have more of this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ—will not consent to have it—that our faith wavers and our hopes grow dim, and the stars one by one drop out of our spiritual skies, and our hearts become hard, and the breath of the world sweeps over us like a chilling frost, and our hands lose the sacred art of clinging to the pierced hand of the Son of God. As the apostle ended, so it seems to me good to end, and to say with intensest yearning of prayer: "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit.*"

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